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FOLK TALES
O F
MADHYA PRADESH

SHYAM PARMAR



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FOLK TALES OF MADHYA PRADESH

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GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Folklore in the different parts of India is a rich legacy for us. While researches in ancient and modern history have been directed in recent decades more to the succession of kings and political shifts not much notice has been paid to the culture, complex traditions and social beliefs of the common people. The sociologists have also to pay a good deal of attention to the customs and beliefs of the people and changes therein through the ages. They have rather neglected the study of folklore which is a reliable index to the background of the people. There has always been an easy mobility of the folklore through pilgrimages, *melas* and fairs. The wandering minstrels, *sadhus* and *fakirs* have also disseminated them. People of the North visiting the temples of the South and *vice versa* carry their folk tales, songs, riddles and proverbs with them and there is an inconspicuous integration. The *dharamsalas*, inns and the *Chattis* (places of rest where the pilgrims rest and intermingle) worked as the clearing house for the folk tales, traditional songs and riddles. That is why we find a somewhat common pattern in folk literature of different regions. The same type of folk tale will be found in Kashmir and in Kerala with different regional complex. These stories were passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth before they came to be reduced to writing.

Folklorists have different approaches to the appreciation of folklore. Max Mueller has interpreted the common pattern in folk literature as evidence of nature-myths. Sir L. Gomme thought that a historical approach is the best for the study of folklore. But Frazer would rather encourage a commonsense approach and to him old and popular folk literature is mutually interdependent and satisfies the basic curiosities and instincts of man. That folklore is a vital element in a living culture has been underlined in recent years by scholars like Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown.

It is unfortunate that the study of folklore in India is of very recent origin. This is all the more regretable because the *Panchatantra* stories which had their origin in Bihar had spread through various channels almost throughout the world. As late as in

1959, T. Benfey had held that there is an unmistakable stamp of Indian origin in most of the fairy tales of Europe. The same stories with different twists or complexes have come back to us through Grimm and Aesop and the retold stories are greedily swallowed by our children. That India has neglected a proper study of the beautiful motifs of our folk tales is seen in the fact that the two large volumes of dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend published by Messrs. Funk and Wagnalls and Company of New York have given a very inadequate reference to India.

What is the secret of the fascination of the folk tales that the old, young and the children are kept enthralled by their recitals ? The same story is often repeated but does not lose its interest. The secret is the satisfaction that our basic curiosity finds in the folk tales. The folk tales through phantasies, make-beliefs and complacent understanding help the primitive man to satisfy his curiosity about the mysteries of the world and particularly the very many inexplicable phenomena of nature around him. We have an element of primitiveness in our mind in spite of the advancement of science around us. Even a scientist finds great delight in the fairy tales of the moon being attacked as the origin of the lunar eclipse. Through the folk tales man exercised his once limited vision and somehow or the other we would like to retain that limited vision even when we have grown up. The advancement in science can never replace the folk tales. On the other hand, folk tales have helped the scientific curiosity in the man. In spite of the scientific explanation as to why earthquakes take place, the old, young and the child would still be delighted to be told that the world rests on the hood of the great snake and when the snake is tired with the weight, he shakes the hood and there is an earthquake. Among the Mundas, an aboriginal tribe in Bihar, there is a wonderful explanation of the Orion. The sword and belt of the Orion, the Mundas imagine, form their appropriate likeness to the plough and plough-share which the supreme *Sing Bonga* God first shaped in the heavens and then taught people on earth how to use the plough and the plough-share. It is further in the Munda folk tale that while the *Sing Bonga* was shaping the plough and the plough-share with a chisel and a hammer he observed a dove hatching its eggs at a little distance. The *Sing Bonga* threw his hammer at the dove to bag

GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

the game. He missed his mark and the hammer went over the dove's head and hung on a tree. The hammer corresponds to the Pleiades which resemble a hammer. The Aldebaran is the dove and the other stars of Hyades are the eggs of the dove. Any illiterate Munda boy will unmistakably point out these star groups.

Weather and climate have their own stories and are often connected with particular stages of the crops. The wet season and the hottest month are intimately associated with the ripening of crops or the blossoming of trees or the frequency of dust storms and stories are woven round them. But nothing is more satisfying as a folk story than the explanation of the phases of the stars, moon and the sun. A Munda would point out the milky way as the *Gai Hora* i.e. the path of the cows. The *Sng Bonga* God leads his cows every day along this path—the dusky path on the sky is due to the dust raised by the herd. The dust raised by the cows sends down the rains. A story of this type can never fail to sustain its interest in spite of all the scientific explanation of the astral bodies.

The "why and wherefore" of the primitive mind tried to seek an answer in the surrounding animal and plant kingdom. Animals are grouped into different categories according to their intelligence and other habits. The fox is always sly while the cow is gentle. The lion and the tiger have a majestic air while the horse is swift, sleek and intelligent. The slow-going elephant does not forget its attendant nor does he forget a man that teases him. Monkeys are very near the mankind. The peacock is gay while the crow is shrewd. The tortoise is slow-going but sure-footed. The hare is swift but apt to laze on the road. The primitive mind is not unintelligent to decipher these inherent characteristics of the common animals he meets. Similarly, when he sees a large and shady peepal tree he naturally associates it as the abode of the sylvan god. The thick jungle with its trees and foliage is known to be frequented by thieves and dacoits. Any solitary hut in the thick of the forest must be associated with someone unscrupulous or uncanny. These ideas are commonly woven into stories and through them the primitive mind seeks to satisfy the eternal why and how of the mind. Folk literature is often crude and even grotesque. The stories of the witches and the ogres come in this category. There is nothing to be surprised

at that. They reflect the particular stage of the development of the human mind and also a projection of the beliefs and fads of the mind. Scientific accuracy should never be looked for in folk tales although folk tales are a very good reflex of the social development of a particular time.

It is enough if the basic ideas regarding the animal and plant kingdom still satisfy that the donkey is dense or stupid or the snake typifies slyness and the fox is deceitful repeated in ancient folk tales have stood the test of age and that would show that the primitive mind was not foolish or credulous. The very idea that the folk tales have woven man, nature, animal and plant creation together shows the great flight of imagination and a singular development of mind. Introduction of moral lessons or any dogma was not done as an after-thought but came in as a very natural development.

The last source of the folk tales is human society itself. The elemental moorings that are at the root of human society are sought to be illustrated in folk tales. The day-to-day life of the common man finds its full depiction in the folk tales. Parental love, family happiness, children's adventurous habits, love and fear for the unknown, greed etc. are some of the usual themes of folk tales. The common man yearns for riches and comforts, he cannot usually look for. He dreams of riches, princes, kingdoms etc., and finds a satisfaction in stories of fantasy. Men love gossip and scandal. Women cannot keep secrets, children will love their parents, a mother-in-law will always think the daughter-in-law needs to be told—these are some of the basic ideas that make up much of our daily life. The folk tales are woven round them and whether fantastic or with a moral undertone they only reflect the daily chores, tears and joys of the common man.

Unknowingly, the folklorists bring in the religious custom, beliefs, food habits, modes of dress, superstitions etc. and thereby leave a picture of the culture-complex of the region and its people. A tribal story does not picture a king riding a white big foaming horse followed by hundreds of other horsemen going for a *shikar*. In a tribal story the Raja will be found cutting the grass and bringing back a stack of it for feeding his cows but a folk tale more current in urban areas will have large palaces, liveried-servants, ministers and courtiers in the king's court. All this only means that the time and the venue of the origin of the stories are widely different. It

is here that the sociologists and the anthropologists come in useful. As life is different in rural and urban areas or is chequered with goodness or badness of the world so is folk literature diversified, as it must be—being a replica of life.

It is a pity that these beautiful folk tales in India were almost on the point of disappearance when a few pioneers mostly consisting of foreign missionaries and European scholars looked into them and made compilations in different parts of India. Our present run of grandmothers know very little of them. The professional story tellers who were very dearly sought after by the old and the young, not to speak of the children, have almost completely disappeared from India. The film industry and the songs pose a definite threat to folklore.

The Sterling Publishers are to be congratulated for launching the project of publishing a compilation of 20 volumes consisting of the folk tales of different regions. The work has been entrusted to specially selected writers who have an intimate knowledge of their region. The regional complex of the stories has been sought to be preserved as far as possible. The stories have an elemental involvement about them and they are such as are expected to appeal to the child and its parents. We expect the reader of the folk tales of the particular region to have a feeling after a study of the stories that he has enjoyed a whiff of air of that area. We want him to have an idea of how Kashmiri folks retire in wintry nights with the *Kangri* under the folds of their clothes to enjoy gossips and how they enjoy their highly spiced meaty food. We want him to appreciate the splash of colour of the sari and the flowers that are a must in Tamilnadu. We want him to know the stories that are behind some of the famous temples in the South as the Kanjeevaram temple. We want him to know the story regarding the construction of the famous Konark temples. We want him to enjoy the stories of the heroes of Gujarat, Punjab and Rajasthan in their particular roles. We want the reader to have an idea of the peace and quiet of a hut in the lap of the Kumaon hills. We want the reader to enjoy some of the folk tales of Bengal and Bihar that have found wings in other parts of India and to appreciate the village life with their *Alpana* and *Bratas*. At the same time we want the reader to appreciate the customs and manners of the Santhals, Garos, and the other tribes inhabiting Nefia and Assam.

A set of twenty volumes of folk tales of the different regions of India by selected authors is an ambitious programme. Folk tales have great impact in bringing in national integration of the country. A Keralite will see a pattern of familiarity while reading the folk tales of Bengal, Assam and Kashmir. Maharashtra and Orissa will come nearer to each other through ties of folk tales. The reader will feel that he is at one with his brother or sister elsewhere. A spread of knowledge of the social patterns of the different regions is a pre-requisite for national integration. It can be modestly claimed that this folk tales series will be of great help in that direction. The Publishers want to have a miniature India in these 20 volumes.

The authors have to be thanked for their interest in the work. I am sure that they have enjoyed the assignment. It is hoped the books will be found useful and interesting to the public. I have no hesitation in saying that the stories of the different areas do make out a miniature India. It is hoped the reader will enjoy the stories and will come to know more of the region and its people.

P.C. Roy Chaudhury

PREFACE

This book is a modest attempt to reproduce twentyfour folktales of Madhya Pradesh in English, some of which may appear unique to the readers in their socio-cultural delineation and themes.

Folklore has always fascinated me. I have had several occasions to collect folklore material from various parts of the country. Especially, when I undertook the research project for my Ph.D. thesis, I was bound to collect traditional folktales, as basic material for analysis. The tales produced here are just a selection from the lot. Though many of them fall within the motif-range of Indian folktales, yet there are tales which may sound different in texture and thematic treatment. More than half the tales collected here are rural-oriented, except the folktales I happened to record from some of the tribal areas like Bastar and Jhabua. They are obviously unlike the tales which I found in agricultural villages of Malwa, Bundelkhand and Chhattisgarh. I have been fortunate that I could collect this material directly from all the major dialects of the state.

As for the translation, all I have to say is that I haven't attempted to polish these tales to make them more attractive. It is the solidity of the body that counts and not the richly embroidered clothes. In this collection one may come across crude and incredible tales too. Yet, there are several tales which suggest that it is worthwhile to fight for the truth in any situation. We find in them the basic curiosity for fiction, inherent in human beings.

Madhya Pradesh has remained exposed to various influences. As such it presents a wide range of cultural complexity. Despite the diversity in spoken dialects, traditional conditioning, beliefs and behaviour of the people, there exists a remarkable communication between them. The tales collected in this

book will not only make a good reading, but will also help the readers peep into the unique fabric of co-existing cultures.

In order to make this book a representative collection, I was obliged to transcreate a couple of folktales from one or two Hindi collections for which I acknowledge my gratitude to their respective authors. In preparing the press copy of this book I am grateful to Ajay who helped me in selecting the stories. I am also grateful to Vijay who made the illustrations for this volume.

Shyam Parmar

CONTENTS

1. **Sona and Rupa** 1
2. **Biran Bai** 6
3. **Kesar and Kachnar** 11
4. **The Clever Daughter-in-law** 14
5. **Jewel Thief** 19
6. **The Wise Patel** 29
7. **The Barya** 32
8. **The Sister's Cleverness** 36
9. **A Dhanwar and a Crow** 40
10. **Meghi Rana** 43
11. **The Deluge** 49
12. **The Earth** 50
13. **The Lightening** 52
14. **Kuvar Kanchhala** 54
15. **Derh Sail** 61
16. **Purchasing a Song** 68
17. **Mali Ghodi** 73
18. **The Lazy Woman and the Four Puppets** 77
19. **Sakti** 81
20. **The Brave Gujari** 84
21. **The Priest's Daughter** 89
22. **The Clever Debtor** 94
23. **The Bird's Utterances** 96
24. **Kheer** 100
- GLOSSARY** 103

F O L K T A L E S
O F
M A D H Y A P R A D E S H

1

SONA AND RUPA

ONCE upon a time there was a prince. One day he came out of his palace riding on a smart black mare. She never brought him disappointments whenever he went for hunting. It had become a habit of the prince to take his bow and arrows and start for the forest as soon as the sun rose a little high.

One day he returned home before it was sunset. Thinking the mare to be thirsty, he turned her reins towards a streamlet which flowed by the palace. The red glow of the setting sun had changed the water to scarlet red and the reflection of the black mare was swayed about on the surging surface of the stream. But what a sight did he see ! Silver and golden locks of hair were floating on the surface of the stream. The Prince thought that handsome girls with silver and golden hair might be taking a bath somewhere upstream. He thought that the girls who had such locks of hair must be very beautiful. He picked up some of the locks and tucked them in his turban and jumped over his mare. Soon the mare, raising clouds of dust, was galloping towards the palace.

In the palace it was time for supper. The queen enquired about the whereabouts of the prince. All the maidservants could say was that they had seen him coming towards the palace.

Every nook and corner was searched but the prince was not to be found. In the meantime one of the maidservants happened to go to the store room and there she saw the prince lying as if in great agony. The prince stopped her and said : "Maid-servant, give not me out or thou diest." But the women and the wind cannot keep a secret. She quickly told the queen about the prince. Fearing something was wrong with the prince, the queen took a winnowing basket and husking and rebuking the maid, came up to the dark room shouting : "Thou silly girl, how hast thou swept this part of the floor." Then as if she had caught sight of the prince all of a sudden, she said : "Well dear son, you are here. What has happened to you ? Why are you so upset ? Just tell me if anybody has insulted you, I shall get him beheaded. Or if anybody has jeered at you, I shall have his eyes taken out or if anybody has raised a finger at you I shall have his finger cut. But do tell me what is the trouble ?

The prince took out the lock of hair he had tucked in his turban and showing it to the queen he said : "I'll marry the girl having such hair. Do this, I stay here; refuse, I leave."

The queen said : "Dear son, it is not a difficult job. Don't trouble yourself on such a small affair."

"But I must have the girl having this type of hair," said the prince.

"Yes, my dear little one, you will have her by all means", assured the queen. But the next moment she felt giddy and stumbled down as she tried to walk.

Presently messengers were sent to search out those particular type of girls. Through an announcement all the young maidens were required to walk through the palace bare-headed.



On the following day the pageant began. All the young unmarried girls passed the palace in a procession bare-headed. The prince watched the procession as it moved. But none of the required type could be found amongst them.

All of a sudden the prince discerned two young girls having silver and golden locks of hair, sitting in the royal enclosure. The prince pointed them out to the queen. She was stunned but supporting herself she said, "Oh ! dear, they are your sisters, Sona and Rupa."

"The prince's countenance fell. But he was obstinate. "Marry them I will, whosoever they may be. And if you don't comply with my request, I shall be gone," he said.

The king tried to bring him round, the maidens of the palace tried to dissuade him and the queen entreated him with hands folded in request, but the prince's mind was made up. The prince was just mad with the idea.

At last the preparations for the marriage had to be made. A grand pavilion of green bamboos was erected. This news went from ear to ear and reached Sona and Rupa. They were amazed and their faces fell. They were mightily distressed that the prince should be so pampered.

Now on the bank of a river there was a sandal tree which these princesses had watered and nursed since their early childhood. It was now fully grown with the princesses' attainment of maidenhood. Here, when the date fixed for marriage arrived and all the preparations were complete, they sought refuge on the sandal tree to save their discomfiture. The sandal tree was a source of comfort to them.

When the time for the wedding rites approached, a search for the princesses was made. They

were found sitting on the branches of the sandal tree. Attendents went under the tree and requested them to come down but the princesses were firm. Then the King himself came and said :

*"Utaro utro ho mahri Sona Bai Rupa Bai
betyan
Lagnya ke bela yan hui rahi."*

Come down, come down ye daughters, my Sona-Rupa daughters, the hour for the marriage has come.

Sona and Rupa answered

*"Pelan to hum Dayaji ho keta, Dayaji ho keta
Abe sasaraji ho kese kangan
Badbad ho mahra chandan ka rookhra."*

We called you father dear, and father dear we called.

How shall we call you father-in-law ?

Go high and high O sandalwood tree...

The two sisters did not come down. The whole family assembled there and requested them repeatedly. Lastly came the prince himself and said :

*"Come down, come down, my sisters
O Sona and Rupa sisters,
the hour for the marriage has come."*

The sisters responded :

"We called you brother dear, and brother dear we called you,

How can we call you our husband, dear ?

Go high and high O sandalwood tree...

And all of a sudden the clouds thundered, the tree burst opened and within no time the two sisters were deep down the tree.

2

BIRAN BAI

THREE lived seven brothers and a sister in a village. The sister's name was Biran Bai.

When their parents were to set out on a long pilgrimage, they called all the seven daughters-in-law. The mother said : "Look, you dear daughters-in-law, keep my only daughter, Biran Bai happy and do not extract any work of her."

The daughters-in-law said : "Our most venerated *Sasuji*, we do tell her but to do something only when you are around. We will see to it that she is comfortable in your absence. We are fortunate to have a beautiful and tender sister-in-law. Moreover, she has always enjoyed more affection and love than any of her brothers. So leave her solely to our care."

In course of time while the parents were away on pilgrimage, the brothers also remained out on business trips. One day when they were out as usual, their wives decided to go out to bring some yellow earth from the outskirts of the village. Biran Bai was very much enthusiastic about it. She immediately responded to the idea : "Yes, yes, let us be off."

All set out for the yellow-earth mine. While the wives dug ordinary earth, Biran Bai filled her

basket with pearls. Seeing this the wives were green with jealousy. They said to themselves : "This flirt of a girl is very wicked. She must be well off in sorcery. We must do something about that or else she may bring troubles, nobody knows what !"

In the afternoon when they were preparing to return, Biran Bai asked : "May I accompany you. I can lift this load pretty well."

"No, no, you have never carried any load so far. We are afraid that our husbands would be very angry if anything happens to you. You just wait here, we shall soon return after unloading our baskets."

Poor Biran waited for them, not knowing what evil intention they had in their minds. She sat there for the whole day, but none of them returned. It was now evening. A band of minstrels passed that way. Biran Bai requested one of the minstrels, "*Maharaj*, please help me in lifting up my basket."

Seeing no one around, the minstrel asked her : "*Baccha*, why are you here all alone."

Biran Bai related the whole story. The minstrel availed of the opportunity and took her in his band. Her wailing proved to be a weeping in wilderness.

Days went by.

The minstrel at first did not allow her to go any where. But soon he sent her for begging in small villages. He forbade her to go into the village she belonged to. He had frightened her saying that she would get nothing in that village and it was very likely that somebody would kidnap her.

Due to fear Biran Bai dared not go to that side. One day when the minstrel was ill, she forgot his warning and unknowingly went in the same lane in which her house was situated. One of her sisters-in-law was standing at the door. Biran Bai began to sing :

*Sat bhai ki eke Biran Bai
Motida khodta ho jogida pakriya ho
Mai mai bhiksha de*

—Seven brothers had a sister named Biran Bai. While she dug pearls a wandering minstrel caught her. O mother give alms.

In the meantime her mother came out of the door and said : “What dost thou sing, child, repeat it again.”

Biran Bai sang again and her mother marked in her a close resemblance of her Biran who had fallen prey, as per her daughters-in-law’s report, to a crumble of a mine while digging yellow earth. The mother then asked : “Where dost thou live child ? Wouldst thou come here daily ? I shall take thee to be my daughter and give you rich alms.”

Now Biran Bai recalled her past and related her previous account. Her sorrowful tale made both of them weep. Thus Biran Bai returned to her house and now her parents thought of her marriage. When the minstrel came to know of her departure, he arrived at her house after his recovery from a long illness. At that time the betrothal ceremony was going on. At such an occasion he spoke out : “Engage her you may to another, but as a disciple she is mine.”

At the time of her marriage he came again and said : “Marry her you may to another, but as a disciple she is mine.”

When the wedding was over and Biran Bai was on the point of departure for her father-in-law’s

house, he came again and said, "Take away the bride you may, but as a disciple she is mine."

Thus the minstrel began to tease her at all places. When the marriage party reached home he came again and said : "The marriage party has returned, but as a disciple the bride is mine."

The minstrel continued to vex her at every step. She was horrified and haunted. She asked her husband and his people to keep her under seven locks lest the minstrel should take her away.

Her bed was laid under seven locks. The night was dark. There was a noise outside. Biran Bai was awakened; she said :

"The first lock has been opened,
my mother-in-law, wake up.

"The second lock has been opened,
my father-in-law, wake up.

"The third lock has been opened,
my elder brother-in-law, wake up.

"The fourth lock has been opened,
my elder sister-in-law, wake up.

"The fifth lock has been opened,
my younger brother-in-law, wake up.

"The sixth lock has been opened,
my younger sister-in-law, wake up.

"The seventh lock has been opened,
my husband, please wake up."

In this way Biran Bai awakened all the persons of the house. In the meantime, having broken the seventh lock the minstrel entered Biran Bai's chamber. All the persons caught him and gave him

a good beating. After that he never showed his face.

Now Biran Bai happily set up her house not afraid of anybody. She was happy with her house and lived a long life.

3

KESAR AND KACHNAR

KESAR and Kachnar were two sisters. Kesar had eight sons but Kachnar was not yet blessed with even one. Kachnar was unhappy over this. She grew jealous of her sister. In course of time she became extremely bitter to the extent of killing her sister's children. Having this ill intention, she prepared *laddus* (sweet balls) and mixed poison in them. She sent them to her sister's house with a message that they were for the children.

The children ate the sweet balls with a great pleasure and fun. Not even the slightest effect of the poison was seen over them. They continued playing joyfully as ever. When Kachnar came to know that the children were as happy as ever, she couldn't believe. As this trick of hers did not come out successful she tried another one.

She bought a basket from the market and put in all kinds of poisonous snakes, black scorpions, frogs and many other stinging insects. She then sent the basket to Kesar's house saying that there were toys for the children.

Kesar was very happy. She received the basket very gratefully. From the door she called out the children and told them that their aunt had sent many toys for them to play with. The children came in. With an eager look their eyes settled

at the basket to see its contents. The basket was opened and in it were really quite a number of dolls and different kind of toys.

In a second the atmosphere became full of noise and joyous exclamations. Each one picked up the toy of one's own choice. All the toys sent by Kachnar were picked up. This trick of Kachnar also failed. She thought to herself as to how her trick failed again. She grew more and more jealous of her sister and doubted whether she knew any magic.

Incidentally, after sometime Kachnar was blessed with a daughter. Milk began to flow from her breast. After a long time God had heard her voice ! But who knows the designs of destiny ! Who knows when would ill luck cast its shadow ! One day Kachnar's daughter fell ill and died. Again jealousy embittered her mind. The girl had died and she thought of blaming her sister for the loss.

Holding the dead body of her child in her lap, she came to her sister's house. The children were playing out and Kesar was taking her bath.

"Where are you Kesar, my sister," called Kachnar.

"I'm here. Be comfortable, I'm just coming," replied Kesar.

Kachnar kept the dead body in the *jholi* (swingbag) and said : "Kesar I've put the girl in the *jholi*. I'm in a hurry and shall be back soon. Please look after the girl till I return."

From the bathroom Kesar said : "You don't worry, I'll take care of her." Soon after her bath, Kesar came out and glanced at the child. The child was sound asleep. In the meantime Kachnar managed to step in. She had come with the intention of picking up a quarrel with her sister and

blame her for the death of her daughter. From one side Kesar and from the other Kachnar came near the *jholi*. But a surprise ! The girl was playing. Tears came in the eyes of Kachnar. Her throat choked with shame and pleasure. She began to repent within herself. Ill feelings and germs of jealousy remained no more in her. With tears in her eyes she said : "Forgive me my sister, I thought ill of you. I wanted to blame you for the death of this child. It is because of your kindness that she has regained her life. Now, I'll never think bad of anyone in future"

For Kesar it was really a unique experience.

4

THE CLEVER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

ONCE a daughter-in-law of a merchant went to fetch water from a well which was at the far end of the village. No sooner did she pull out a bucket full of water, four travellers appeared at the well.

One of the travellers said to her : "I'm thirsty, will you kindly give me some water."

She hesitated to comply with his request, primarily because she was not fully clothed, and secondly there was no tumbler for water. She, therefore, thought of some excuse for not giving them water at the well. So she put a question : "May I know who are you ?"

"A traveller," replied the first man.

She supplemented a further question : "There are only two travellers, which one are you ?"

The man could not answer. The daughter-in-law on finding him perplexed said : "Unless you answer my question I'm afraid I will not be able to give you water." Saying this she poured the water in a pitcher and pulled another bucket.

Just then the second traveller came forward and requested her for some water. The woman threw at him the same question : "Who are you ?"

"I'm a poor man", said the second traveller.

"There are only two poor persons, which one are you?"

The second traveller failed to answer the question and he also did not get water from her.



The third man turned up. He was also questioned as the other two. He called himself an

illiterate. The daughter-in-law asked : "There are only two kinds of illiterates, which one are you?" The question made him confounded.

Lastly, came forward the fourth traveller. He said that he was a fool. The woman immediately asked him which one of the two kinds of fools he was ? He too was blank.

The woman finished her task and lifting up the pitcher she said : "If you all are thirsty, come along with me to my place. There you will get water." The travellers followed the daughter-in-law to her house.

On reaching home the daughter-in-law first placed the pitcher on its stand and thereafter, dressing herself properly, came out in the verandah with a tumbler full of water. She gave water to all the thirsty travellers who resumed their journey after quenching their thirst.

Her father-in-law, the merchant, saw all this from another verandah. He spoke to himself : 'My son is not here and his wife brings outsiders in the house. This is not good. I shouldn't remain quiet when things like this happen before my eyes. Something must be done immediately. One's own boil can not be cured by one's own hands."

Thinking in these terms, the merchant went to the king and related the story about his daughter-in-law's behaviour. The king summoned the woman through a guard. When her mother-in-law came to know about this, she was terribly disturbed and asked : "Oh ! my daughter-in-law did you have any quarrel at the well ?"

The fair lady simply nodded her head. Then she went to the guard and requested him to go and ask the king whether she is being summoned as a daughter-in-law or as a daughter.

After some time the guard came back with a palanquin and said that she was being summoned as a daughter-in-law. So she sat in the palanquin and reported herself to the king.

"Why did you call the four men to your house when your husband was away?", enquired the King.

The woman explained : "To give a glass of water to a thirsty traveller is the duty of a house wife. When I went to fetch water, I was scantily clothed I couldn't have given them water at the well because of my little clothing. So I found a way of bringing the travellers home by asking them questions of the riddle type. My questions were such that they were unable to answer."

"What were your questions", asked the King.

The woman repeated the questions. The courtiers and the King failed to answer them. On being confused the king requested her to tell the appropriate answers.

The woman said : "In my opinion the answer to my first question is that there are only two travellers—the Sun and the Moon. The answer to my second question is that the cow and a daughter-in-law are the only two creatures which could be classified as poor. The third question involves the answer—water and food. They go to everyone like the illiterates do." Continued the woman, "when the fourth man said that he was a fool, he was blank when I asked him which of the two fools he was."

"Do you mean that there are only two types of fools?" asked the King with curiosity.

"Yes, very much", replied the daughter-in law.

"Who are they ? Tell me quickly," asked the King eagerly.

The woman said : "If you forgive me then only I shall answer the question."

"Don't hesitate to answer in the court".

"There are two fools at the moment. One is my father-in-law who reported against me in the court without finding out the facts and the other is the King who without considering the daughter-in-law's social honour called her before the court."

On hearing this the king became very much non-plussed but in his heart of hearts he was full of praise for the woman.

5

JEWEL THIEF

IN a certain village there lived a rich merchant. When he grew old he divided his property amongst his four sons : to the first he handed over his money-lending business, to the second he gave his grocer's shop, to third a cloth shop and to the fourth—the youngest one—he assigned his high yielding fields. All of them were farsighted and diligent. They made a good fortune through their inherited property.

One day the rich man called them and said : "My sons, now that my days are nearing the end, I wish you should always continue to be united and remain faithful to each other. May your interest grow in your jobs. But you know, I may go any moment. I have called you to disclose a secret. Below the legs of my cot you will find four jewels which you shouldn't forget to take into your possession after my death. But mind it, the jewels should be taken out when you are all present and only then you should have one each."

After a couple of months the old man passed away. The four brothers made up their mind to take out the jewels. They assembled in their father's room. The piece of ground under the legs of the cot, on which their father used to sleep, was dug-out. But to their surprise they found only three jewels. They looked at each other. Where is the forth one ? They were sure about their father's statement. They thought that the missing jewel

must have been taken out by one of them as no other person besides them was aware of the precious stones.

They were now keen that the jewel must be traced out and the name of the culprit should not be exposed as it may cause embarrassment and hatred among them, and moreover their father's soul would be pained in the heaven.

They gave full thought over the problem. Lastly, they decided to seek the help of the wise King whose kingdom was miles away from their village. The King was known for his justice. On reaching his kingdom, the four brothers sought his audience and explained their purpose of arrival. They said : "O the great King, we expect from you that

*Mal paiye apno chor na janyo jaye
Preet-reet din din badhe, kije soi upaye."*

—We should get back the jewel, but the thief should not be made known to us. Do something in such a way that our relation may grow warmer in future.

The King patiently heard them and said : "Friends, for today you had better stay at my guest house. Tomorrow I shall look into the matter."

They were led to the guest house where they were served with all kinds of food. While enjoying the food one of the brothers commented : "Though it is a royal food, the flour used in the cake appears to be spoiled by blood."

The very moment the second brother uttered : "The ghee too is stale."

"To me the milk used in the food seem to be tinged with human milk," said the third brother.

The forth added : "I sense the *pattals* (leaf-platters) too are made out the leaves spoiled by cow-dung."

One of the attendants was listening to their conversation. He went to the King and conveyed him all that he had heard. The King became furious over the comments made by the brothers. He summoned them in his presence and also called the *bhandari*, the store-keeper. He asked the brothers: "Is what all you said about the food true ?"

The elder brother replied : "Since you are interested to know my lord, it would be better if you enquire into the matter thoroughly."

First of all the supplier of the flour was called, who said that he had nothing to say as he had purchased the wheat from Chunni farmer.

Chunni farmer was summoned in the court. With folded hands he said : "My lord, when the harvesting was being done, a wild bore happened to come there. I killed the animal over the heap of threshed wheat. I'm sorry I couldn't manage to put aside the portion of the wheat which had blood stains." The first comment made by one of the brothers came out true.

Now it was the turn of the *ghee* seller who revealed that he had bought the *ghee* from a sweeper, who might have collected it from the left over leaf-platters.

The King felt very much embarrassed when he came to know about this queer fact.

Then the milkman was asked about the milk he had supplied. He replied, with guilty expression on his face : "Sir, kindly forgive me ! I accept, it was my mistake. I had kept the milk-pot

near a *gwalan** feeding her child. When the child took a little turn in her lap, some of the milk dropped in the milk pot from her breast. I assure you it will never happen again."

The King kept mum. Lastly the leaf-platters' supplier was called before the King. He too admitted the fault.

All the four brothers' comments came out true. The King and the courtiers were amazed at the remarkable sensitivity of these people. After a little pause, the king said, "Brothers, you are so sensitive, clever and wise folk that I wonder why don't you find out the culprit yourselves ? I think I would not be able to solve your problem. You should better go to the king of Dharampur, who would certainly help you to your satisfaction."

The brothers arrived at Dharampur. Next morning they saw the King and related him the purpose of their arrival. They further requested him that the judgement should be done in such a manner that their relationship should not be strained.

The King of Dharampur had already heard about these brothers. He thought that it would be wise enough to test the intelligence of the brothers before undertaking their problem. The King ordered for a pot. Its mouth was closed. The King said : "First tell me what kind of thing is in the pot?"

The elder brother took the pot in his hands and shook it. "There is something of a round shape", said the elder brother.

The second brother said after inspecting the pot, "Yes, it is spherical and its colour is red."

"It's of course roundish and red in colour, but it has seeds in it", said the third brother.

* Milk maid

The youngest brother said : "Ah ! it is pomegranate." Immediately after saying this he banged the pot against the ground and broke it into pieces. There was really a pomegranate in it. The King was surprised to find the brothers so intelligent. He requested them to go to Swarngarh.

So the brothers started for Swarngarh. On their way the elder brother said : "It seems that a lame camel has passed this way."

"The camel has one eye only" said the second brother.

The third brother said : "One of his teeth was missing too."

"I think a pregnant woman was sitting on the animal", said the youngest brother.

Along with these brothers there was one more traveller, who was serving them as a guide. When they reached Swarngarh, the man who brought them there said that he will go and meet the King and fix up the appointment. As a messenger from the King of Dharampur, he went to the King of Swarngarh and narrated what he had heard saying the brothers in the way.

The King called the brothers and asked them : "How in the world did you come to know that a one eyed, lame camel having a tooth broken and having a pregnant woman sitting on its back passed that way ?"

The eldest brother said : Your Highness, on the road I saw that three of the foot marks made by the camel were very clear. The impression of the fourth was not so distinct as the other three. So I assumed that the animal was lame."

"When I saw", said the second brother, "that the camel had eaten the grass from one side of the

road only, I presumed that it must by one eyed."

The third said : "And where he had eaten the grass, there a patch of grass remained untouched. This gave me an impression that the animal had lost one of its teeth.

The youngest brother said : "Of course I said that there was a pregnant woman sitting on the animal. This I came to know when I saw some hand marks of the rider on the ground where the animal took rest."

Listening to this explanation of the brothers, the King of Swarngarh said : "Well it will be difficult for me to trace out the jewel thief amongst you. You had better go and meet my daughter who lives in Dhara Nagari. She is sure to help you out."

They proceeded towards Dhara Nagari. There the daughter of the King of Dhara Nagari used to give judgement from behind a curtain. For the judgment she used to sit in a balcony of the palace. On the main gate of the palace there was a big drum. Those who wanted to have any sort of judgement used to come there and beat the drum.

As soon as the sound of the drum was heard the princess of Swarngarh came out and sat in the balcony behind the curtain. The brothers said : "We are four brothers. As you know we want to remain united and do not want to have any friction amongst us. Please do something in a manner that

*Mal paiye apno, chor na janyo jaye
Preet reet din din badhe, kije soi upaye,*"

The princess of Swarngarh listened to them, patiently and then said : "Well, I will try to do my best to help you out. But you will have to stay here for a fortnight."

The brothers agreed to stay there. The princess asked them to stay separately without keeping any sort of communication amongst them so long as the jewel is not traced. She had in fact put them under vigilance.

Next day she called the elder brother and narrated him the following story :

In a certain town their lived a King. Between his son and the son of his *divan* there was intimate friendship. One day both these young friends decided that they would send their respective wives to each other on their first wedding nights. Whosoever shall be married first will observe this promise. After all this would make their friendship more intimate, they thought.

After some years the prince was married. His wife came home. He remembered what he had promised to his friend. He told his wife about the promise the two friends had mutually held. The newly married woman followed her husband's wish. She left the palace and set out for meeting the *divan's* son. As she had crossed a little distance she met with a gang of robbers. They stopped her and tried to snatch the ornaments which she was wearing. The prince's wife requested the thieves : "Listen, you are like my parents. Please listen to me. I am the wife of the prince and I am going to meet the *divan's* son. This is my first wedding night. Let me go there to fulfil my husband's promise. On my return I will gladly hand over all these ornaments to you."

The thieves discussed amongst themselves. One of them said that the prince's wife is the daughter of a big man and may deceive us.

The other one said that it would be foolish of them to let her go. But the chief of the gang said to her : "Well, you may go, but keep the promise when you return from there."

The bride proceeded further. It was midnight. The *divan's* son was waiting for her. As soon as he heard her foot steps, he came to the door to welcome the young woman. He said : "Welcome my sister !" The bride entered the room. *Divan's* son presented her a set of new clothes and some ornaments. This is just a small present from a brother to his sister. Kindly accept this", said the man. He then served her a good food and touched her feet when she started to go back.

The bride on her way back met the thieves. "Lo, I have come back. Here are my ornaments", saying this she began to take off the ornaments one by one. Tears came to the eyes of the chief of the thieves. The other members of his gang were also astonished to see that jewellery worth lakhs of rupees come to them without any effort. But the leader of the gang asked her not to take out the ornaments. He said : "Daughter, you have called us parents. How could we take your things now ?" Instead he presented her a diamond necklace and allowed her to go.

The bride arrived at her palace and narrated the prince the whole incident.

After telling this story, the princess of Swarnagarh asked the elder brother : "You have heard this story. Now tell me. What do you think about the prince, the *divan's* son, the bride and the thieves ?"

The elder brother replied : "So for I think they were honest persons. The prince sent his wife to

his friend because he was true to his word. We rarely come across such people. The bride is again commendable. She followed her husband's wish. She went to his friend's house on her first wedding night because she wanted her husband to keep his word. The son of the *divan* was equally very faithful. Seeing a young girl in his chamber, he treated her as his sister. The thieves too were very good. They did as the good parents generally do. They left the ornaments worth lakhs of rupees. They were wonderful. To me all were truthful and honest.

The princess called the next brother. She related to him the same story and got the similar reply from him.

The third one also gave the same opinion.

Lastly, the youngest brother was summoned. The princess told him the story and asked him to give his comments about the characters. The youngest brother reacted differently. He replied : "Well, if you ask me sincere comment I should say that the prince was a fool. To send one's own wife at midnight to a friend's house was absolute foolishness. Hell with such a promise ! The bride too was a loose character. That is why she did not hesitate to go out at midnight to another man's house. And the *divan's* son, he was no less a fool. He left the young women untouched when she came to him. The thieves were again equally idiot who did not avail of the opportunity."

The princess heard the comments of the youngest brother and came to the conclusion that he was the culprit. She said : "So you are the person who has stolen the missing jewel. Take it out and give it to me immediately otherwise I will teach you a lesson which you will never forget. Hurry up, give me the jewel."

The youngest brother first hesitated to accept the charge. But he soon realised that he will not be spared if he does not give the jewel. He took out the precious stone from his pocket and gave it to the princess.

The princess had already collected the other three jewels from the three brothers. She got the missing one also. She then called all the four brothers and gave them one jewel each.

Thus, the jewel thief was traced, but nobody came to know who he was. All the brothers got their missing gem and continued to live happily.

6

THE WISE PATEL

IN a certain village there lived two brothers. After the death of their father, they quarrelled amongst themselves about the division of the money and property left to them by their father. One of the villagers suggested that they go to the near by village and refer the dispute to the village leader, known for his wisdom.

Both of them liked the idea. They donned their turbans and *angas* and started for the village, which they had not visited previously. They walked and walked but did not find any trace of the village. Again when they walked a little more, they saw a cluster of trees and some fields at a distance. Soon they reached the outskirts of the village. They entered in the vicinity. They saw a few servants of the leader working in his fields. They asked one of the servants : "Oh ! brother, is the leader at home ?"

The servant replied : "Of course, he is very much there, but he is absolutely deaf."

As they moved a little ahead, they came across the leader's young daughter. The brother inquired to her : "Tell us, is your father at home ?"

Removing the pitcher off her head she said : "Of course, he is at home, but he is totally blind."

Now both the brothers went to the leader's

house. At the entrance one of the wives of the leader was sitting. The brothers again asked her : "Is the leader at home ?"

Rather rudely she responded : "He is dead".

But just at that moment the leader appeared. He said : "Come in, please come in."

Both the brothers sensed something queer about him. The leader was neither deaf nor blind. And was very much alive.

They were offered tobacco and beetle nut by the leader. By this time they had decided not to put their problem before him. Instead they asked him : "Why do the people call you deaf, blind and even dead ?"

With a loud laughter he replied : "Brother, I've ten to fifteen servants who are made to work in the fields. Everyday they ask me for money, but I just don't pay any attention to them, and that's why they call me deaf. I agree with them and do not think they are wrong.

"My daughter calls me blind. She has grown up now and I'm looking for a suitable match for her but she doesn't believe me. She thinks that I'm unaware of her blooming youth, hence she calls me blind.

"What my wife said is also true. You see, I've four wives. Often they quarrel amongst themselves. Today I gave a good beating to one of them. She probably might have said in disgust that I'm dead." Having answered to their query, he said : "Now tell me, what should I do for you ?"

Both the brothers looked at each other. They preferred to keep quiet about their quarrel. With folded hands they replied : "We just came here to

see you. Any time if you happen to pass our village please pay us a visit."

Saying this the brothers returned. They forgot the quarrel and decided to live together.

7

THE BARYA

THERE was an old woman. One day she went to a potter's shop and bought four *baryas* (small earthen pots). She came home and placed them in an open shelf. Then she took out some flour from a jar to cook her food.

She could hardly do any work. She heaved a sigh and said to herself : "It is harvest season. Had there been a son to me, he could have gone to cut the wheat !"

Her words echoed in the room. The *baryas*, which were kept on the shelf, also heard this. They clattered and began to talk to each other. The old woman groaned again. To that effect suddenly she heard a voice : "Mother, mother, may I go and cut the wheat ?"

"Who is there?" asked the old woman looking here and there with her winking old eyes : "From where are you speaking ?"

Just at that moment one of the *baryas* rolled down from the shelf and came up to the woman. The pot said : "Mother, mother, it is me...me your...your *barya*."

A smile ran over the old woman's face. She laughed and said : "You mischievous little one ! What can you do all alone ?"

"But you can certainly wait and see what I

can do" said the small earthen pot. It then rolled out of the main door. Rolling it went further to the leader's house and said : "Patel, Patel, may I go and cut the wheat ?"

With his small squeezy eyes the leader saw the *barya*. He thought that empty vessels sound the most. Taking a lot of puff from his bubble-bubble and throwing it out, he exclaimed : "Go away you small kid, it is not your job."

"But you can certainly wait and see whether I could do that. Just tell me how much should I cut ?"

The old man puffed again. With an unconcerned look he said : "Well I've fifty acres of land. Go and cut all the wheat crops that is ripe there."

The *barya* went to the fields and cut all the wheat. Seeing it do so much of work, the leader couldn't believe. He thought about the saving of the money he had made, which he was supposed to pay to the labourers for the cutting of that much of wheat corns. He called the *barya* and said : "I'll pay you for the work."

"Then I'd prefer to be paid in kind. When you thrash the wheat, give me that much of grain which could contain in me."

"Will that much do ?", asked the leader with surprise. But in his heart he was pleased that a pot full of grain is nothing in terms of payment in kind. With a victorious smile on his face he agreed. He said : "As you like my friend ! Then do come on that day and collect your share."

The day came, The wheat grains were thrashed and ready for disposal. The *barya* appeared and asked for his share.



The leader put some grains in the *barya* but it didn't fill. Again he added some more grain. Still it couldn't be filled. Again and again he added, more and more he added, but the *barya* continued to remain unfilled. Time passed on and the leader began to realize that he would not be able to fill the *barya* as promised. His stock was almost finished. He was ashamed of not paying the *barya* in full. The *barya* called a cartman and asked him to carry and then unload whatever wheat he had collected there to his house.

On arriving at the old woman's place the *barya* called out for her. He said : "Mother, mother, open the door, I've brought wheat." The old woman was surprised to see so much of wheat.

After a few days, the woman burnt her hand while baking the bread. The *barya* saw this from the shelf. He rolled down to the woman and said : "Mother, mother, as you've grown old, I'll marry and bring you a daughter-in-law.

The *barya* went off to marry someone.

On his way he saw a marriage party waiting by a well for a drink of water. The bridegroom was fetching water from the well. The *barya* placed himself at the rampart. Naturally the water was poured in the *barya*, and when lifted by the groom he caught his throat. The poor bridegroom became so nervous that he could make himself free only after promising the *barya* that he would give his bride to him.

In this way the *barya* got a bride. He came home and called aloud : "Mother, mother see here is your daughter-in-law."

When the old woman opened the door she really saw a bride standing beside the *barya*.

Since then the old woman never craved for a son because the *barya* served her as a real son.

8

THE SISTER'S CLEVERNESS

THREE was a rich man who had seven daughters and a son. All the daughters were married in time. Now the son was to be wedded. Preparations for his marriage were started. The son himself went to invite his sisters from their respective fathers-in-law's houses.

First he went to the youngest sister's house and asked her to come with him. But she told him that she would come later because she had to complete many household chores. Early in the morning she prepared some *chapatis* for her brother as he was to leave for another sister's house in another village. Out of the *chapatis*, she had made, she kept aside one for her child. The brother left in time with the *chapatis* which he was to eat on the way.

Some time later the child came in and asked his mother to give him something to eat. The mother took out the *chapati* she had kept for him. Just when she was about to give it to him, she noticed that the *chapati*'s colour had turned green. Immediately she examined the utensils and other things and found that by mistake she had crushed a snake while grinding the flour.

She realized that if her brother would eat the *chapatis* he would die of poison. Hurriedly she went out to meet him in the way. The brother had not gone very far. She took the *chapatis* from him

and gave him something different to eat in the way. The brother continued his journey.

On her way back, the sister saw a potter and his wife working at the wheel. They were making earthen lids. A heap of lids was already there for use. With curiosity the sister asked them as to what they were going to do with so many lids. The potter replied with a sigh of grief : "You know there is a rich man who has seven daughters and only one son. Very soon the son is going to be married but unfortunately he would die before his marriage. No one can wipe out the words written by the destiny. There will be danger of death at every ritual of the marriage. The parents might die of grief. To save their lives we are preparing these lids. We fear that they may lose their lives by heart failure. Hence we are making these lids."

The younger sister got very much perturbed on knowing this. She asked the potter's wife : "Isn't there any way to save the son ?"

The potter's wife replied : "Yes, of course, he could be saved, my daughter. One of his sisters will have to pose herself a mad woman and risk her life at every step of the marriage."

The sister resolved to undergo all the difficulties for her only brother. She untied her hair and began to act as a mad woman. Posing in this manner she reached her father's house where the celebrations of her brother's wedding had started.

The brother was being annointed with turmeric paste. The sister reached the spot acted as a mad woman and said : "Anoint me first with the turmeric paste." All the relatives had to agree. She was annointed before her brother.

Next day when the women of the house were to set off for collecting yellow earth from a mine

to observe one of the marriage rituals, the mad sister insisted that she would also go with the party. Of course they had to take her with them. It so happened that when they reached the spot a portion of the mine crumbled down to the earth. No body was hurt. The first accident was thus avoided as the mad sister had disturbed the marriage proceedings and delayed the party.

Then followed the ritual of Ganpati worship. Again the mad sister meddled in the ceremony. She came and occupied the *chowk* (coloured seat) where her brother was to sit. She noticed seven scorpions under the seat. She immediately killed them and put them in her bag. Thus the second accident was again averted.

Further the third accident was also averted by the alertness of the mad sister. She had seen a poisonous thorn under the bamboo mat. She took it out, broke it into pieces and put them into her bag.

Now the marriage procession set out for the bride's house. On the way, one of the main gates was destined to fall over the bridegroom, but the mad sister warned everyone just in time. Thus the bridegroom and the other people were saved without any injury. The party reached the bride's place. The mad sister went inside and occupied the groom's seat under the wedding booth. Everyone requested her to get up from the seat as a girl couldn't be married to a girl. But the mad sister was not prepared to listen to anyone. She said : "I'll marry the bride first."

To make her convinced the Brahmins had to utter *mantras* and do all kinds of wedding rites. Just at that moment several needles came, no body know from where and stroke her neck. She took them off within a spur of moment and kept them in her bag. When the mock marriage was over, she

left the seat for her brother.

Then came the time for circambulation round the fire. Here too the mad sister created a scene. This time seven snakes attacked her. She killed them all and put them in her bag.

The marriage party lastly came home. Both bride and the bridegroom were to retire to the bed-chamber, but the sister said : "Let me sleep on the bed alone." There was a picture of a lion lying over the bed. Suddenly it became alive and the sister, who was very much alert, killed it with the sword lying beside the bed. She took out the lion's nail and put it in her bag. Only after this she allowed the couple to get in.

Next morning the madness of the sister was over. She became a normal woman and told everyone why she had to pose as a mad woman. She took out each and every thing she had collected and explained to the relatives how she had saved her brother.

Everyone praised her cleverness. The brother too was proud to have such a sister.

9

A DHANWAR AND A CROW

DEEP in the forest there once lived a Dhanwar with his Children. His daily routine was to go out hunting and bring whatever he could get to support his family. Though he used to grow paddy, *Kodo*, *Kootki*, and *jawar*, he had to depend mainly on his hunt.

The Dhanwar had kept a crow as his pet. The crow used to fly away in the morning and used to return by dusk. As part of its habit the crow used to visit the court of Lord Brahma.

There was a *neem* tree outside the door of the court. Here the crow happened to sit and listen to all the proceedings of the court. On his return, the crow used to tell all the things to the Dhanwar, which he happened to hear during the day.

Once as usual the crow was sitting on the *neem* tree and was listening to all that was going in the court. Brahma's *munshi*, the record keeper, was taking down whatever was being spoken by his master.

"This time there will be no rainfall", said Brahma, "And there will be a famine. It shall rain only on the mountains."

For the crow it was the most important thing he had heard that day. He went to the Dhanwar and said : "This time the rainfall will confined to the mountains. You should therefore cultivate and

sow seeds of crops on the mountains and grow whatever you wish to."

Keeping in mind what the crow had said, the Dhanwar started making his cultivation on one of the mountains. In course of time, the fields were ready. He treated them with some manure and thereafter sowed a variety of paddy.

There was sufficient rainfall on the mountains, but at other places, as predicted, not a drop fell. Lord Brahma came to know about the well-grown fields of the Dhanwar.

Next year he said to his *munshi* : "Now there will be a greater famine. Everywhere rich crops will be destroyed by pests and insects like *Dhan-Chuhka*, *Fafa* and *Katua*,"

The crow heard this and conveyed it to his master. The Dhanwar was upset when he listened to this, but the crow said : "The number of the pests and insects would be only one lakh", he suggested, "If you call two lakh *Chhanchhad* and *Maina* birds then there will be no problem and your crops shall remain safe."

The Dhanwar did as he was guided by the crow. On his invitation two lakh birds came and spread all over his fields. No sooner did the pests and insects came they were attacked and swallowed by the birds. The Dhanwar's fields were as green as before. They yielded a rich harvest. Again the Lord came to know about it.

The crow as usual was sitting by the side of the court of Lord Brahma. The Lord was dictating something to his *munshi*. He uttered : "This year there will be an unavoidable famine. Those who will transplant dry stalks of paddy shall get a good yield."

The crow heard this and passed it on to his master. The Dhanwar carried out the instructions

and once again got a rich harvest.

Next year the crow heard Brahma saying that there will be one lakh rats to destroy the crops. As usual the crow warned his master and advised him to call two lakh cats to face the trouble. The Dhanwar followed his advice. Cats, numbering two lakhs, went about in the fields and when the rats came they could get only half a rat each as their meal.

Now Brahma was again perplexed as the Dhanwar was not at all affected. He asked his *munshi* to record his words. He said : "Those who will not separate the seeds from the stalks in time, their crops shall not grow. Also those who shall not use cowdung as manure shall not get any yield."

This time again the Dhanwar took care of the instructions he had received from his pet, the crow, and succeeded in getting a rich harvest.

Those who are alert, vigilant and cautious are never deceived in times of difficulty. Success always follows them.

10

MEGHI RANA

MEGHI Rana was a fat and a funny man. He had a very dark complexion and long moustaches. Because of his queer habits he was known all over the kingdom. In his funny mood he used to catch the black floating clouds from the expanse of the sky and squeeze them between his hands. As a result this used to bring rains. His laughter was so loud that it appeared as if two huge mountains had collided. He used to tuck a shining comb in his thick grove of hair. It was his favourite ornament because he had received it from the God. It had the quality of shining day and night.

In the deep forest of Vindhya, near the bank of river Mahi, there lived a King, named Gilli. The people of the forest had a great reverence for him. They were so obedient to him that they used to sleep and wake at his order. The King was considered by his subject of one of the most powerful beings throughout the land.

One day, just for the sake of fun, Meghi Rana tried his pair of scissors on the moustaches and the beard of King Gilli. Before the King could collect his wits and call for help, Meghi Rana flew away in the sky. The next day he went close to Gilli's daughter and cut off a few locks of her hair. The girl cried so loudly that the King came running to her. On hearing about the misbehaviour of Meghi Rana, he flew into a rage. By that time Meghi Rana had gone away to a far distance.

Now the King ordered his forces to capture Meghi Rana alive by all means and bring him in his presence. The forces combed the jungle to catch Meghi Rana. They looked for him in the rivers and the dales; searched for him in caves and mountains. After two days and two nights of hectic search Meghi Rana was captured on the top of the Vindhya mountain. The soldiers took him to Gilli. The King was very angry and ordered his soldiers to take him away to Mangalji, the trader. Gilli thought that Mangalji would be able to inflict him with severe punishment.

Mangalji, the trader, had a great influence over the vicinity. Glancing at him with a piercing look, he bared his teeth under his big moustaches and then ordered : "Take away this rowdy being out of my sight. I don't want to see his bloody face. Throw him away in my salt store." He continued loudly, "I'll see how he would dare to do any mischief in future."

Meghi Rana was still more clever. No sooner did he enter the salt store, he transformed it into water. The water leaked out of the store and spread all over the trader's house. This made Mangalji very much disturbed. Hurriedly, he ran to the King. The King was resting after having his meal of *Panya*. Mangalji related to him the latest mischief of Meghi Rana. With folded hands he said : "Do something my lord, Meghi Rana is not an ordinary prisoner who could be controlled by a person like me."

Meghi Rana was brought out of the store and transferred to the care of Breenjha potter. The King said to himself : "Now the potter Beenjha would teach him a good lesson."

Beenjha threw Meghi Rana in a burning oven. Here again Meghi Rana gushed out so much of water that the oven turned into a cold pack.



Seeing this unusual step taken by Meghi Rana, Beenjha, the potter got terribly upset. He rushed to the King and narrated the incident.

Now King Gilli's patience was at an end. He ordered the chief of his forces to drag out Meghi Rana from the oven and sent him to Ram and Laxman.

Ram and Laxman took Meghi Rana to a thick forest where Laxman gave him a good beating. Meghi began to cry and seeing him in pains, Ram took pity on him. He said to Laxman : "Brother don't beat him any more. Do as I say. Take him to the big buffalo and put him on one of its horns. He will be all right within a few days." Obedient Laxman carried out his brother's wish. He took Meghi Rana to the big buffalo and put him on one of its horns.

For many days Meghi Rana remained there. No body was aware of his whereabouts. The sudden disappearance of Meghi Rana resulted into a drough in Gilli's kingdom. For a long time there was no rain. The shadow of famine occurred over the land. Not a grain was available. People began to die. There was no grass in the fields and no water in the rivers. The land became full of cracks all over. Seeing the miserable condition of the land the wise people went to the King and told him about the worst that had fallen on them.

King Gilli grew much worried. From where could he get the rains ? There was nothing he could do to avoid the famine. For three days and three nights he did not sleep. The more he thought the more he got confused. It was he who had insulted Meghi Rana. And now, from where could he get him back ?

On the fourth day he summoned his courtiers. Several wise men were also invited to attend the session. Before he court the King called an unch-

ained she elephant carrying a betel-leaf and announced that whoever shall undertake the vow to bring back Meghi Rana should lift the leaf. No one dared to undertake the mission. But after a while a *Jogin* came forward and lifted the leaf.

The *Jogin* first went to Mangalji and asked him the whereabouts of Meghi Rana. The trader directed her to go to Beenjha, the potter. When the potter was referred by the *Jogin*, he guided her further to meet Ram and Laxman. The *Jogin* entered the forest in search of Ram and Laxman. She went from one forest to another, but didn't find any trace of them. But when she entered the third forest, after a lot of difficulty she found the two brothers. Both of them directed her towards the big buffalo and said : "There you will find Meghi Rana. He is put on one of its horns."

The *Jogin* shook the oozing horn but Meghi Rana did not come out. She went round the horn but there was no way for him to come out. The *Jogin* said : "Oh ! Meghi Rana, are you sleep or you are awaken ?"

"Neither am I sleeping nor am I awaken", was the reply from inside.

"Then why don't you come out?"

"I don't wish to."

"Are you angry?"

"May be."

"Then what do you want ?"

"I want to marry King Gilli's daughter."

The *Jogin* burst into laughter. Then she assured Meghi Rana that she shall manage to get him married to King Gilli's daughter. On being assured by her, Meghi Rana tried to come out of the horn. But neither did the horn break nor

could he come out. So the *Jogin* had to find out another way.

She went to her son-in-law and asked him to prepare a rope and a stick. When both the things were ready she came near the horn with them. She tied the rope to the horn and then asked her son-in law to hit it with a the stick. He hit it once. Then he again hit it. Like this he hit six times. On the seventh blow the horn broke and in a moment Meghi Rana came out. At that moment the clouds roared. He gave thunderous laugh. As a result heavy rain fell. All the ponds and lakes were filled again. The dry land became muddy. The rivers began to flow. Everyone was very happy.

With folded hands King Gilli requested Meghi Rana to forgive him. He married his daughter to him and said : "I'm the King just for a name, but you are the real one."

11

THE DELUGE

THE Bhils of Madhya Pradesh believe that it was the fish which first brought the news of the approaching deluge to a washerman.

On hearing the news from the fish, the washerman entered in a box with his sister and a cock. When the deluge occurred the box floated over the water. Thus they were all saved. Soon the deluge was over. The messengers of the God heard the crowing of the cock and located the box floating on the water. It was brought on the bank and later opened before the God. From there came out the three beings.

The God asked the washerman : "Who are you ?" The poor man related the whole story. God then made him stand facing east, then west, then north and asked him to swear that the woman accompanying him was his sister. The washerman carried out the order and swore that the woman with him was his sister. He was then asked to face the south. This time the washerman said that the woman with him was his wife. This compelled him to marry the woman.

In course of time the couple had seven sons and seven daughters. These children grew and multiplied into a big population. To the first son, born to the deluge couple, the God presented a horse. But he didn't know the use of this animal. He couldn't ride it. So leaving the horse he went into the deep forest. Out of this son came the Bhil tribe. Hence the Bhils have a great reverence for floods.

12

THE EARTH

IN the Gond mythology the universe was first hidden under the water. Only the great God—Thakur Dev—was floating above on the watery expanse on a lotus flower.

One day Thakur Dev sent a crow to find out the whereabouts of the Earth. The crow flew for six months till he met a huge tortoise—Chakarmal Chatri who was standing on one leg in the water and his head was so high that it was touching the sky. The tortoise informed the crow that the Earth had been swallowed up by Gichna Raja, the giant worm, living under the water. It could be brought back if only the worm is made to vomit.

The crow patiently heard him. Then Chakarmal Chatri took the crow with him to Logandi Raja. They conveyed him the great God's desire. The King asked his twelfth brother Lohasur to prepare a huge cage. Soon Lohasur carried out the order and brought the cage, which he had got prepared by one of his younger brothers. Now the tortoise and the crow were made to sit in the cage and asked that they should shake the chain attached to the cage when their work under the sea was over.

Under the water when the tortoise and the crow reached near Gichna Raja, he was sleeping. Seeing him asleep the tortoise called him aloud.

Gichna woke up and was so much annoyed on being disturbed that he threatened the tortoise and the crow to devour them alive then and there. The tortoise began to tremble with fear, but the wise crow saved the situation. They boldly told him that they were sent by the great God *Thakur Dev* to bring the Earth back and that if he did not comply with the God's order, he would be killed.

Gichna Raja, the giant worm was perplexed when he was told about God's desire. Just then the tortoise caught hold of his neck to make him vomit the Earth. The tortoise pressed the neck a little more, which made the worm so uneasy that the creature vomited twenty-one times. First he gave out *Dharti Mai* (Mother Earth), then he vomited *Mahamundi Dharti* (the great-headed Earth), then he vomited the *Pap Dharti* (the sinful Earth) and then the yellow Earth and the black Earth. Lastly the Gichna Raja vomited the *Kumari Dharti* (the virgin Earth).

Soon the crow took the Earth in his beak and shook the chain for being pulled up by Logandi Raja. Thereafter the crow took the Earth to the great God. *Thakur Dev*, who received the Earth on one of his palms, gave it a round shape. Then he placed the ball over the surface of the water. In this way the Earth on which we are living came into existence.*

* Most Tribals in India have a similar story about the origin of the Man and the World. The story according to the Santhals a primitive tribe of India, has been narrated in our Folk Tales of the Santhals.

13

THE LIGHTENING

THE lightening, according to the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, is the cobra's daughter who had come out of a box.

There is a legend that Lakshman, who is known as Lakshman Jati among the Gonds, used to play his *kingri*, a fiddle. One day he was asked by his brother Rama not to play with the instrument very often. So Lakshman Jati put it aside near his bed.

After some days, one night the *kingri* started weeping and made a complaint that it was not being used. At first Lakshman Jati hesitated to play the instrument. But he couldn't resist long. He lifted the *kingri* and began to play it.

Indrakumari, one of the fairies of the heaven, heard the sweet sound of the fiddle. She was so much charmed that she came down the Earth to see the person who was playing it. She went about too many places and at last made her way into Lakshman Jati's abode. She stood there expecting the player to look at her, but he did not pay any attention to that fairy. Lakshman Jati's behaviour made her enraged. She broke some of her bangles and threw them in his room. She also left a earring on his bed.

Next morning when Sita came in Lakshman Jati's room, she saw the broken bangles and the earring. She didn't say anything to him but repor-

ted it to her husband, Rama. Rama came to his brother's room and found him sleeping. He picked up the earring and decided to find out the girl to whose ear the earring would fit.

Hence the search was made. Unfortunately the earring did not fit in the ear of any woman in the village. Lastly Sita was summoned and to Ram's surprise the earring fitted her ear.

Rama felt very hurt to find this. He insulted Lakshman Jati which made him leave the palace. Lakshman Jati was very much grieved on being treated guilty. The Earth gave him way. He went down the Earth where he met a cobra. He served the cobra for many years. The cobra was very much pleased with Lakshman Jati. He married his daughter to him. After some days the cobra asked Lakshman Jati to return to the world. He presented him a box saying that it should not be opened until he reaches home or else he would lose his wife.

From the underworld Lakshman Jati started climbing up. He was anxious to see what the box contained. Curiously, he opened the container midway his journey. No sooner did he open it, a beautiful girl came out and disappeared in the sky. Lakshman Jati ran after her, but by that time she was transformed into lightening.

Now, whenever the Gonds see lightening in the sky and hear thunder sound they say it is the cobra's daughter running in the sky and the roaring of the clouds is the sound of the arrows shot at her by Lakshman Jati.

14

KUVAR KANCHHALA

THERE was a King. One day, early morning he was sitting in the balcony of his palace. At that time a woman sweeper happened to pass by who on seeing the King turned her face and uttered in repugnance, "Rama, Rama", and spitted.

Seeing the peculiar behaviour of the woman sweeper, the King was astonished. He at once called one of his attendants and asked him to bring the woman to him. The woman, trembling with fear, was brought to the King. The King asked her the reason for her peculiar behaviour.

The poor woman folded her hands and said : "Oh ! King, I'm your humble servant. If you forgive me then only I'll tell you the reason." When the King granted her forgiveness, the woman sweeper said : "Oh ! King, you don't have any son or daughter. They say it is inauspicious to see your face early in the morning. That is why I failed to restrain myself. My Lord, please forgive me."

The King felt very sad about it. Had he been blessed with any child, he wouldn't have to see this day !

After this incident he left the palace and went into the forest. For many days he ate wild fruits and roamed here and there.

One day he came across a hermit who asked him the reason of his refuge in the forest. Without

any hitch the King narrated the whole story. The hermit felt sorry for the King. He gave him a magic fruit and asked him to give it to his queen. On eating the fruit she will give birth to a daughter. The hermit also warned the King that the princess should be married before she attains her eighth year lest she would have to remain unmarried throughout her life.

What else the King needed ? His frustration disappeared in a moment. He took the fruit to the palace and presented it to his wife in a hope to see the face of a child who was to come after nine months.

At the correct time the queen gave birth to a girl. The King was very happy to have a daughter. He named the child Rajal. Like the waxing moon the girl began to grow, In happiness and bliss how the eight years passed away, the King did not notice.

One day the King was sitting in his court. In her playful mood Rajal just walked around the place and came up to the gallery. From there she wanted to watch the proceedings of the court. The attention of the courtiers was drawn towards her. They had not seen such a beautiful girl before ! The very moment the King realized that his daughter had grown up and it was time that she should be married. At once the King called a barber and ordered him to find a suitable prince for his daughter.

On the gate of the palace Rajal stopped the barber and said : "Listen, take this dress of mine. On whosoever this dress would fit I shall marry him. Also see that the boy should be the only son of his parents like me."

The barber went from one region to another in search of a suitable match for the King's daughter. If the dress fitted on any boy he failed

to be the only son of his parents. The poor barber was tired of searching the kind of boy, the princess desired.

One day he met another barber. They sat down to gossip and told each other their problems. Just then the second barber said : "Our prince has also laid down the same condition. His name is Kuvar Kanchhala. "They showed each other the dresses they had been given. Incidentally the dresses were of the same size and the prince was also the only son of his parents. So they both agreed for the marriage of their masters' children. They worked out the details and fixed the date for the marriage. Both the barbers returned contented to their countries. On both sides elaborate preparations for the marriage cclebration started.

But on the other side there was Rajal's aunt, who wanted to get her brother's daughter married to Kuvar Kanchhala. When she came to know that Rajal was going to be married to Kuvar Kanchhala, she decided to play a trick to stop her marriage.

So she now started telling Rajal : "O ! Rajal, on what ground did you decide to marry Kuvar !" There was a sense of disapproval in her tone.

The innocent girl not knowing the mind of her aunt one day just asked : "Aunty, have you ever seen Kuvar ?"

"What is there to see in him ? Haven't you noticed that he daily comes to the well."

"O ! Aunt, why don't you take me with you. I want to see how he looks."

For Rajal's aunt it was a good opportunity. She said immediately : "Then why don't you come today. I'll show you the prince."

"Oh ! my good aunt", said Rajal happily.

In a short time both were off. When they

reached the well Rajal enquired : "Where is the Kuvar ?"

With a vindictive smile on her face the aunt replied : "Here is your Kuvar", and she pointed at a tortoise which was swimming in the well.

When Rajal saw the creature she began to cry in utter distress. She felt as if she had crashed on the ground. She thought to herself that she had been cheated. She was so disturbed that she lost her balance of mind. She gave a loud shriek and de-setting her hair, with a sigh she sang :

"What kind of creature is this,

With a shiny back, he wades gently through the water ?"

She went to the potter's house and said :

"O, potter, you are my brother.

Don't make the beautiful pots for my wedding."

Then she went to the band of musicians and said :

"O, my brother musicians,

Don't play the tunes for my marriage."

After going to everyone's house turn by turn she went to her father's sister and said : "Aunt, you are my only aunt. Don't sing the *Kaman** of my wedding.

On the other side Rajal's aunt conveyed a message to Kuvar Kanchhala that Rajal speaks ill about him.

Kuvar Kanchhala thought that it was better to see and hear than to believe what was conveyed through the message. Collecting up seven of his



best companions, he set out for Rajal's town. All of them wore the same dress and their horses were also of the same colour. The party arrived near the palace and camped in Champa Garden.

Suddenly saffron smell spread over the town. It was also felt in the palace. Rajal thought the bees might be taking away the saffron from the container.

"Aye you, what are you doing here. Go and close the container, I suppose the lid is opened," shouted Rajal at a maid-servant in her room.

But the maid-servant responded : "Princess, there is nothing wrong with the container. Kuvar Kanchhala has arrived to marry you. His party has camped in the Champa Garden."

Rajal went to the garden and saw to her surprise seven princes. She said : "Each one has five coloured turban. Each one's horse has a chain of twinkling bells. O, please tell me who is Kuvar Kanchhala amongst you ?"

Kuvar Kanchhala himself replied : "Each one has a five colour turban, but Kuvar Kanchhala has a golden one. Each one's horse has a chain of twinkling bells, but Kuvar Kanchhala's horse has a golden one."

No sooner Rajal heard this she recognized Kuvar Kanchhala. She felt sorry about all she had said of him earlier.

Kuvar Kanchhala said tauntingly : "See, am I not a creature that wades through the water ? Now why did you come to me ?"

With this remark the prince turned his horse and went away with his companions.

Rajal couldn't stand this. She took off her *choli* (bodice) and hung it on a tree saying : "When I die, then only he will know how true I was."

Saying this she burnt herself then and there.

Kuvar Kanchhala went and married some other girl. Soon he came to know that Rajal has committed *Sati*. He felt very sorry for the tragedy. He went to the Champa garden. There he saw the *choli* hanging on a branch of a tree. Addressing to one of its shining beads he said: "When the diamond wearer, is no more; how is it that you are alive, O fool ?"

Replied the bead instantly : "Rajal died because of you, then how is it that you are alive, O fool ?"

Hearing this Kuvar was no longer inclined to live without Rajal. He killed himself on that very spot. Seeing him do this, the companions also did the same.

15

DERH SAIL

THREE once lived a humorous King. Once he wished to have a go at fun. It was a cold winter night and he announced that whosoever shall stay underwater throughout the night shall get half of his kingdom. Everyone listened to this strange announcement, but no one dared to stay underwater for the whole night. Lastly, a poor brahmin came forward. Because of his poverty he wanted to commit suicide. He thought of taking the chance. He stayed under the water all through the night and the next morning appeared before the King. The King was astonished at the feat. He had announced just for the sake of fun and now the brahmin came out to be a claimant in reality.

The King asked the poor brahmin : "You'd been in the water for the whole night, tell me what have you seen ?"

Shivering with cold the brahmin replied : "I saw nothing except darkness around me. But from a far off temple a beam of light was coming and refracting in my eyes."

"Quite right, you were getting heat from that light. If that light wasn't there you wouldn't have done this task. How can I give you credit for this ?"

The poor brahmin was greatly distressed on hearing this sort of discouraging response from the

the king. He wanted justice, but he dared not open his lips before the King. He went to some other kings to seek justice but they simply refused to listen to him. At last a princess heard his story and assured him that she would try her best to get him half of the kingdom.

The princess invited the King to her palace. The king arrived. Next day the princess prepared the food by her own hands and served it to the king. But she had kept a glass of water at a little distance from the table. While having the meal the King asked for water.

The princess replied : "The glass of water is, of course a little away from you, but you can quench your thirst by seeing it."

The King laughed : "Has anyone ever quenched one's thirst simply by seeing water ?"

The princess smiled and said : "If a poor brahmin can draw warmth in cold water just by seeing a beam of light from a far off temple, then why can't a king quench his thirst by seeing the water kept at a little distance from him ?"

The King was very much displeased at this remark. He pledged that he would marry the princess but wouldn't complete the wedding ceremony and leave the princess alone. On his behaviour the princess with an annoyance vowed : In case this happens she would get him beaten by his son."

The King couldn't stand his conversation. He at once returned to his own palace.

After some days the King sent a message to the princess's father that he wished to marry his daughter. After several requests the princess's father accepted the proposal to marry his daughter to the King. Soon the marriage bells rang. A few rituals were completed. Then came the turn of *Sapta-*

padi—circambulation of the couple around the sacred fire. The King remembered his pledge. As soon as they completed three and a half rounds, the King left the hand of the princess and untied the ceremonial knot. Leaving her behind, he jumped over his horse and rode away. The King's marriage party also returned. Now it was the turn of the princess to care for her vow.

The princess formed a *gammat mandali* (a dramatic troupe) and started giving performances at several places. The *gammat mandali* earned a great name in course of time. While touring round the country, the group of performers arrived in the capital of the same King. Owing to the repertoire the *gammat mandali* was invited to give a performance before the King. Soon the arrangements were made. Many courtiers and distinguished persons were invited to witness the show. The King could not recognize the princess as she was in different clothes. When the show was over he called the princess and talked to her for a long time. The princess was very beautiful and he fell in love with her. The King asked her party to stay for some more time in his capital, so that he could find ample time to enjoy the company of the princess.

When some days passed away the princess with her *gammat mandali* moved to some other place. After a few months she gave birth to a son. She gave her child a good education and made him a smart and clever young man. She thought that her son is now ready to fulfil her vow. Therefore she told her son about the vow she had taken. The son heard his mother attentively and assured her that he will do the job. He went to the same kingdom after sometime.

He was well aware that it was the kingdom of his father. He instigated the people and started unlawful activities. One day he came to an old

woman who used to draw water from the King's well. The boy said : "Hurry up, old woman ! Don't be lazy in drawing the water, otherwise Derh Sail will come and drag you away."

The old woman got frightened. She asked the boy : "Is there any way to save oneself from Derh Sail ?"

"Yes there indeed is. I'll tie you with the cart. By that time I'll draw water from the well and irrigate the plants. In this way you will be saved."

The old woman volunteered to be tied to the cart which was very dirty with mud stains. The boy threw the pot in the well and revealed that he himself was Derh Sail. Saying this he disappeared from the spot.

The old woman began to weep and called for help. The King's servants heard her cry. They came running and untied her from the cart. Within minutes the news reached the king that a person named Derh Sail is doing all Kinds of unlawful things and disturbing the peaceful life of the town.

Next day Derh Sail went to the river bank and selected a deep water site to cast his fishing net. Purposely he had tied four or five gems in his net. A little later he pulled his net out. A group of fishermen who were standing nearby, saw that in his net there were a couple of shining gems along with some fish. They asked him : "Friend, how is it that you are catching gems ?"

"I've cast my net in very deep water. You can also get gems if you do so," said Derh Sail and he left the place thereafter.

them that at night *Hun Hun* deity will come to their respective huts. He cautioned them to be very careful of that dangerous deity.

The poor wives were frightened. They asked Derh Sail whether there was any way to save themselves from that calamity.

Derh Sail suggested : "When *Hun Hun* deity comes, in any form, you should take burning sticks and put them in its mouth. You will all be saved if you care to observe this ritual. It is the remedy suggested by Derh Sail."

At midnight the fishersfolk returned to their places. The poor folk had tried in vain the whole day but did not get any gem. On the contrary, they had a good catch.

It was a cold night. They returned shivering with cold. It was but natural that they were producing *Hun Hun* sound from their mouths. When they approached their huts making *Hun Hun* sound, their wives took them to be the deity in multiple number. They immediately took in their hands burning sticks and plugged them in their husbands' mouths. This created a great hue and cry amongst the men. Soon the women realized their mistakes.

The people complained to the King about all such mischievous and wicked activities of Derh Sail. The King asked his men to arrest the culprit. But he could not be caught. The King became worried and ultimately decided to catch Derh Sail himself.

Next day, after the first hour of night, the King set out on his horse in search of Derh Sail. In one of the huts on his way Derh Sail was grinding *kodo*. He was disguised as an old woman. The King came to her and asked whether she had seen Derh Sail going that way.

The woman said : "Some time back I had seen him going to this side." She further suggested that if he wished to arrest Derh Sail he had better be disguised as an old woman and grind there. Only then he will be able to arrest him.

The old woman's suggestion convinced the King. He changed the dress with the old woman and occupied her place. Derh Sail, now dressed as the King, took his horse and came to the palace. He said to his people on guard that an old woman might come to the palace gate and pose as the King; she should be taken as Derh Sail and be given a beating. Also she should not be allowed to enter the palace.

Thus instructing the guards, the young boy went into the palace and slept on the royal bed. The dawn was approaching. The king, dressed as the old woman, waited and waited but Derh Sail didn't pass that way. Suddenly it struck him that he had been befooled by Derh Sail. In order to save his face from his people he came to the palace gate and wanted to go inside. The guards on duty asked him : "Who are you ?"

"I'm the king", said the old woman.

As instructed, they took the woman to be Derh Sail and gave him a good beating. The person was also not permitted to go inside the palace. But in the morning they recognized the king and began to tremble with fear for their action.

Early morning Derh Sail appeared at the gate. The king was very much furious. He asked Derh Sail the reason putting him (the king) under such a heavy strain.

Derh Sail replied : "I'm the son of that princess whom you left after half circumambulations round the fire. Today I have fulfilled her pledge.

You are my father. Please excuse me for my behaviour.”

The king repented on his foolishness. He called the princess to his palace and announced to his subjects that from then onwards Derh Sail should be treated as his son. He also called the poor brahmin and gave him half of his kingdom as per his announcement made for the sake of fun.

16

PURCHASING A SONG

THREE was a stupid woman in a certain village. No body could compete with her in the art of picking up quarrels. But there was one thing in which she was lacking : neither could she sing nor play on any musical instrument.

While grinding the corn in the morning, very often the women of the locality used to sing. But this woman had nothing to sing at that time and therefore she used to feel jealous of others. One day she thought of asking her neighbour the way to sing songs. So she went to her house.

“Sister”, she asked very innocently, “tell me how could you come out with songs.”

The woman was very funny. She knew that her neighbour was a fool. She immediately responded : “Oh ! my dear you didn’t know even this ? Songs are sold in the market. Why don’t you go and purchase a few ?”

When she came to know this, she became impatient to buy songs. She returned home and restlessly awaited her husband to come. As he stepped in, she said : “First you go and buy some songs for me from the market.”

Even the husband was not aware that the songs were sold in the market. He thought to himself what an unusual thing his wife had asked for. He pondered over the matter for a while. It was very well known to him that his wife

would not spare him if he failed to meet with her demand. He gave a second thought to the request and thought that songs might be sold. Before going, he asked for five rupees from his wife.

On reaching the market he entered a shop and asked : "Do you have songs ?"

The shopkeeper was surprised because he had never come across such a customer who wanted to buy songs. He was a shrewd man. He said : "You can get them in other shops."

The villager went to many shops. All the shopkeepers took him to be a fool and made fun of him. Each one of them suggested to him to go further.

Till the evening the villager was unable to get any song. Now he became worried as to how he will convince his wife. Desperately he started back to home.

Incidentally he saw a big rat moving on the road. Within a second it disappeared in a hole. With curiosity the villager went near the hole and tried to listen to the sound coming from it. Suddenly an idea flashed in his mind. The rat was digging. The sound of digging gave him the first line of a song :

Khode, kharar kharar (It digs *kharar kharar*)

He repeated it several times as to remember it by heart.

On going a little further, he saw a black snake. When he discerned the snake creeping the second line of the song occurred in his mind :

Sarke sarar sarar (It creeps *sarar sarar*)

Then he repeated both the lines together :

Khode kharar kharar

Sarke sarar sarar

He was overjoyed as he had two lines at his disposal. A little ahead he saw a rabbit in a bush.

He thought of catching the little animal and so he made a trap. The poor creature didn't find any way to go out. This situation of the rabbit gave him third line of the song :

Dekhe tagar magar (It sees *tagar magar*).

No sooner he repeated this line the rabbit was off on its way. Now the villager had three lines at his command.

On moving a bit further he saw a herd of deer. They were all running and jumping. Their movements gave him another line. Immediately, he composed the fourth line :

Koode alang phalang (They jump *alang phalang*)

His joys knew no bounds. Now he had a full song on his lips :

Khode kharar kharar

Sarke sarar sarar

Dekhe tagar magar

Koode alang phalang.

Uttering the song he came home. No sooner did he step in the house he was questioned by his wife : "Did you bring any song for me ?"

"Please wait a minute I'll tell you", replied the villager.

But his wife was impatient : "No, no, first tell me the song."

The villager sang the lines and then said in a serious tone : "You should know that this is a costly song. I've paid all the money I had. Now keep it in your mind and don't lose any line."

The woman was very much pleased. She learnt all the four lines within a short time. She had an intention that at dawn she would sing the song while grinding the corn and would give a surprise to her neighbours.

She was extremely happy to the extent that she didn't remember the time. Just after midnight she started grinding. It was a dark night. Incidentally four thieves came to her house and began to make a hole in one of the walls to get in. Just then the stupid woman sang the first line :

Khode kharar kharar (Lo, it digs *kharar kharar*)

She repeated the line a number of times. The thieves became suspicious that they had been noticed. They thought that the woman might have seen them. Even then they were not sure about their impression. They thought that it might be someone else. So they started creeping through the hole. At the same moment the woman switched over to the second line :

Sarke sarar sarar (They creep *sarar sarar*)

The thieves became still more suspicious. They preferred to find out whether the woman had really seen them. So they began to look here and there from the dark corner of the house. Just at this moment the woman sang the third line of the song.

Dekhe tagar magar (They see *tagar magar*.)

They were now convinced that the woman had noticed their presence. They instantly decided to run on their heels to avoid any trouble. Cautiously they moved and gave a jump over the wall. Incidentally the woman sang the fourth line :

Koode alang phalang (They jump *alang phalang*.)

By the time the thieves were off and the sun had risen pretty high, the woman had finished her task. Her husband woke up and was taken aback when he saw a hole in the wall of his room. He became pale with fear and shouted at his wife : "Where are you, you stupid fool ? What have you done ?"

The woman was absolutely ignorant of the happening. She too was surprised to see the hole. They ran to find out whether they had lost anything from the house. But by God's grace everything was safe and sound. They took a sigh of relief.

After a little pause the husband asked his wife : "What were you doing all through the night ?"

"I was singing the song," replied the wife.

"Oh !", said the husband.

Now he could realize the coincidental effect of the song. With a proudish look he said : "Have you noticed that the song proved to be so effective that the thieves dared not to put us at any loss."

The woman stupidly looked at her husband and responded : "Really ! you seem to have bought me one of the best songs from the market".

17

MALI GHODI

IN olden times, in a village named Mali Ghodi, there lived a *banjara*, a gypsy trader. Centuries back when there were limited number of roads and the network of railway lines was not woven, the *banjara* used to carry the merchandise from one place to another on pack animals.

Each *banjara* used to keep several bullocks, donkeys and other such animals which could carry heavy loads. Keeping a dog was a necessity for every *banjara*. Such dogs were, of course, well trained to look after the caravan.

The *banjara* of Mali Ghodi village had also kept a dog. It was of a high breed. The animal was very beautiful with hair all over its body. In looks the dog was very calm and quiet but in times of danger it was very alert and vigilant. The dog of this *banjara* was like his right hand and was more faithful and loyal to him than his relatives.

Once when the *banjara* was to go on a long journey, he needed some money. His merchandise was already sold and he didn't want to bargain his animals. So he decided to keep his loyal and dear dog as security for the money he required. The moneylender agreed to keep the dog against the sum. The *banjara* collected the required amount and came home leaving back his dog with the money-lender.

Next day the *banjara* departed for the journey. After some days it so happened that a band of dacoits came to the moneylender's house and relieved him of the cash and the jewellery he possessed. The dacoits were in a big number. They surrounded the moneylender. All of them were carrying arms. The dog sensed the danger but didn't bark as it was little away from the scene. Had it been on the spot it would have warned the moneylender about the approaching dacoits. But now in order to save the life of the moneylender it kept quiet. When the dacoits left the house, the dog followed them without being noticed by any of them.

The dacoits had looted a lot of money and many valuable things. They carried all the things to a jungle. At a particular spot, near a pond, they dug a hole and hid their loot. Then they all left the place. The dog who followed them saw this. The animal went back to the moneylender and started pulling his shirt. The man was very sad about the loss. First he didn't understand the dog's intention. In order to divert his mind on some other thing he, with a little curiosity, followed the animal.

The dog led the moneylender to the same place near the pond where the dacoits hid the money. The dog tried to dig the place which gave a clue to the moneylender that there is something hidden below. He himself started digging the same place and to his utter surprise he found the cash and the valuables which the dacoits had snatched from him. He got back his money and the jewellery. He was so happy and grateful to the dog that he decided to allow the animal to go back to its master.

The moneylender tied a letter addressed to the *banjara* of the Mali Ghodi village in the dog's neck and freed the animal. This was done as a reward

for its faithfulness. The animal understood the purpose of the moneylender and realized that it was free. And from now onwards it had not to stand as security. The dog had no attraction for the rich food it was getting at the moneylender's place. It had served the *banjara* for several years and preferred to live on crumbs of bread thrown to him by his master. With anxiety to meet the master, the dog ran towards the place where his master had gone. Jumping and wagging the tail it was running on the tracks. From the other side the *banjara* was returning to see the moneylender. He had earned that much money, which he wanted to repay to the lender and take back his animal. When he saw the dog coming towards him he thought that the dog might have left the moneylender's place without his notice. He flew into rage to the extent that he couldn't resist beating the animal. He became still more furious, lifted his stick and gave several hard blows on the dog that the poor animal died on the spot.

How much pain was there in the dog's eyes. Every time the dog tried to tell its master by moving this way or that way to make him read the letter tied to his neck. There was a keen expression in the animal's eyes that it was faithful and loyal to its job. Though it had had several severe blows, no signs of reaction were shown by the animal. It had deep affection for its master. Till the last moment, the dog was looking at its master with reverence.

But soon the *banjara* saw the letter tied to the dog's neck. He took it out and unfolded it. The moneylender had written :

My dear *banjara*,

I'm grateful to your dog because it had served me more than a man. Because of this dog I got back the money which dacoits had

looted from me. Now I do not want the money which you had borrowed from me as this animal has given me more than what I need. It is no more standing as security. So I'm relieving the animal.

The *banjara* was shocked on knowing the fact. There is a saying : *Bina vichare jo kare so pachhu puchhtaye*—One who acts without prior thinking realizes the mistake afterwards. By the time the *banjara* understood the fact, the dog had died.

The *banjara* did the funeral ceremony of his dog and built a *samadhi* on the same place. The place is still identified in Chhattisgarh as 'Kukar-samadhi'.

18

THE LAZY WOMAN AND THE FOUR PUPPETS

HE was a simple, hard working, honest farmer. At day break he used to untie his pair of bullocks from the cow-shed and set out for his fields and return in the evening after the day's work.

His wife was a lazy and lousy woman who used to shun the household work. The poor man had to work hard while his wife used to sleep comfortably at home. Neither she cared for her husband nor did she ever sympathize with him. On his return from the field the poor man used to cook his and his wife's meal.

At dusk the lazy woman often pretended as if she was sick and had a shooting pain in her stomach. The husband, though tired enough of the day's work, had to look after her. He used to feel very odd but he was helpless.

This continued for a long time. Daily the farmer's wife kept on pretending in the same way and continued complaining about the same trouble. One day the farmer was so disturbed that instead of attending to his wife, he went to his sister's house and explained to her the hard chores he was undergoing. She listened to him patiently and pondered over the matter. She then suggested to him to keep a watch on his wife and see what she did during the day.



The farmer did accordingly. To his surprise, he found that his wife was preparing delicious dishes. He too felt hungry and wished to relish the dishes, but he controlled himself, as he was secretly watching his wife.

After enjoying the dishes his wife stretched over the bed. In the evening the farmer appeared as usual. Seeing him come she resumed to pose sick.

The farmer went to his sister's house and narrated the daily routine of his wife. His sister was very wise. She went to a dollmaker and bought from him four speaking puppets. These puppets had a peculiar quality : seeing anyone doing anything wrong they used to comment. Giving them over to her brother she said : "Go and hide these dolls in the four corners of your house. Whenever your wife would prepare dishes in your absence, these wooden figurines would threaten her.

The farmer did as he was told. Next day, as soon as he left for the fields, his wife started preparing *Bhajiyas* (spicy snacks). At that moment one of the puppets said : "Aeh ! that's it ! how sweet ! the queen is preparing *Bhajiyas*."

The second said : "Oh ! don't you know, this is her daily routine."

The third uttered : "Quiet, my friend quiet. If she happens to listen to us she will be frightened."

The fourth said : "If she is afraid of us, why does she do this kind of work ?"

The woman really got frightened on hearing these voices. She began to tremble with fear. She was so terrified that she did not know what to do. How come these voices in this house ! She sat quiet for a moment. Then again tried to prepare *Bhajiyas*. Again she heard the same voices uttering the same things one after another. Now the lazy

woman was sure that the house was haunted by ghosts. She left the things as they were and ran to the fields for her husband. She was sweating all over due to fear.

Seeing his wife coming, the husband gave a hearty laugh. He was fully aware of the matter but he kept on ploughing the field. Approaching him the woman told him that the house was haunted by ghosts and that they were speaking.

The husband asked her calmly : "What were the ghosts speaking about ?"

She was obliged to tell what she had heard. she said : "They were saying that the queen was preparing *Bhajiyas* and that it was her daily routine."

"And what more they uttered ?"

"They said that the woman would be frightened..."

"Hum !" said the husband, "tell me is it true."

The woman nodded her head and pulled her own ears.

"Look, now you won't do it again" warned the farmer.

"Never, I promise. I won't do it again, but please save me from the ghosts", said the woman.

The husband laughed and comforted her.

Never in future the wife prepared any dish in the absence of her husband. Rather, she started helping him in his work. She was never lazy again.

19

SAKTI

HARI and Gujar were two brothers. They served the King of Sambalpur. Both of them were very simple, but in strength and courage nobody could compete them. Despite their physical strength, they were lacking two things : one that they had no education and, secondly, they were not in the habit of carrying weapons. They didn't even possess a single sword. All the courtiers used to ask them about their not carrying weapons. In order to satisfy the courtiers they began to keep wooden swords. However, they were depending on their physical strength. Both of them were well built and were dark brown in colour like true Gonds.

Generally in courts there are people who feel jealous of others. Some of them always found faults in others. The court of the King of Sambalpur was no exception. There the courtiers started saying that the two brothers are of no use to the King. They would not prove of any worth in times of danger, because they carried wooden swords.

A group of jealous courtiers conspired to involve the two brothers in some sort of work that might bring either bad name to them or displeasure of the King. They had no courage to instigate these brothers to show their skill in the use of weapons. Very soon they got a chance to bring

these brothers into trouble. News had reached the King's ear that in a nearby jungle there lived a man-eating tiger. If it was not killed, the village would become no man's land in a few days. The courtiers suggested to the King that Hari and Gujar should be ordered to go and kill the animal with their wooden swords.

Both the brothers were obliged to carry out the royal order. Though they had understood the plan of the courtiers behind this assignment, they preferred to test their strength.

Hunting a tiger is not an easy job. The animal possesses tremendous strength as it can move even after having three bullet shots on the body. One can understand that a single bullet can kill an elephant or a rhino, but a single shot fired at a tiger would make the animal all the more furious. The tiger could tear away anything which comes on its way and it could even jump several feet high. But when a tiger turned a man-eater it became much more clever than it usually was.

There is a proverb *Patta khadka ki sher bhadka*. The tiger becomes conscious even at the slightest flutter of a leaf). In Chhattisgarh the tribals believe in an evil spirit named *Mua* which is supposed to help the tiger when the animal is in need of a prey. There is a superstition that *Mua* speaks like human beings and very often misguides the travellers and leads them towards the awaiting tiger. Hari and Gujar were asked to go and kill the animal.

Both the brothers set off for the job. They decided that one of them would act as *Gara*. *Gara* is an animal tied to a pole or a tree to attract the tiger on a desired spot. The other planned to hunt the tiger. They had to do so, as for them there was no such facility available as the modern hunters have. These brothers were not to shoot the

animal from any platform built on a tree. They were bound to fight the tiger face to face and to kill it. And they had to do everything with their wooden swords.

Hari and Gujar reached the jungle. The man-eater sensed the presence of human beings and came out of its den, slowly reached the spot where one of the brothers stood posing as *Gara*. The other one was also very cautious. The tiger approached very close to *Gara* and attacked him, but it so happened that just then the other one reached the ferocious animal. Both of them attacked the animal from either side. Both were now fighting with all their might. Attacks and counter-attacks were on. Suddenly Hari and Gujar took shelter behind a tree. The tiger thought that it would crush the tree and catch those creatures under its jaws. Within seconds the tiger's fore legs were round the tree. Instantly Hari and Gujar caught hold of its legs from both the sides and began to twist them. It was a killing twist and the tiger fainted after some time. Then both the brothers gave the animal a harsh beating with their wooden swords which finally resulted in the tiger's death.

The news of Hari and Gujar's success reached the court. Everyone was full of praise for them. When they presented themselves before the King, the King expressed his gratitude to them. He pronounced that whatever area of land the two brothers shall cover in one day, it shall be their property. The two brothers encompassed a vast area which was formally presented to them as *jagir* by the King of Sambalpur.

Later, the place occupied by the brothers came to be known as *Sakti*, because of the association relating to the strength shown by the two brothers.

20

THE BRAVE GUJARI

ONCE there lived a brave Gujari*. One of her daily duties was to go and sell curd in the town. She was a beautiful young woman with a slender waist. Her eyes were like slit mango and her teeth resembled a set of pearls. When she laughed, it appeared as if flowers were showered and when she wept each drop of her tears turned into a pearl.

One day a troop of *Firangis* (foreigners) came into the town. Within a short time several tents were pitched amongst the mango trees. The people were scared of going that way because of the soldiers. The women of the town dared not come out of their houses. They had a fear that they might be taken away to the camps by the troopers.

But the brave Gujari was above any fear. She was bold and courageous enough to face any situation. She knew well that a troop of *Firangis* had camped amongst the mango trees, she made up her mind to go out and sell curd. She was even prepared to go to the camps to sell curd. With seven other girls she started for the camps with a pot full of curd on her head. Soon her mother-in-law came to know about her departure. She came running and stopped her in the way and said :

* a milkmaid.

"For miles and miles the troops have camped;
For God's sake don't go my daughter-in-law.
I fear they may take you away."

But the daughter-in-law was firm to carry out her wish. She didn't listen to her mother-in-law and continued to proceed with the other seven maids.

She had a pot full of curd
And four maunds of milk she was carrying
With seven maids lo she goes
In the army camps.

The Gujari was now within the camping area. The chief of the troop saw her moving with seven maids. He was so much charmed with her beauty that he couldn't stop her selling the curd. Soon he realized his duty and came in her way. He said .

*Ye too kai chhe devi-devata
Ne ke thane ghari sunar*

—O ye girl, are you a goddess or a piece of a goldsmith's work ?

The beauteous Gujari replied :

*Hun nai chhe devi-devata
Ne nai chhe ghari sunar
Jalam diyo mahari maya ne
Ne roop diyo kartar.*

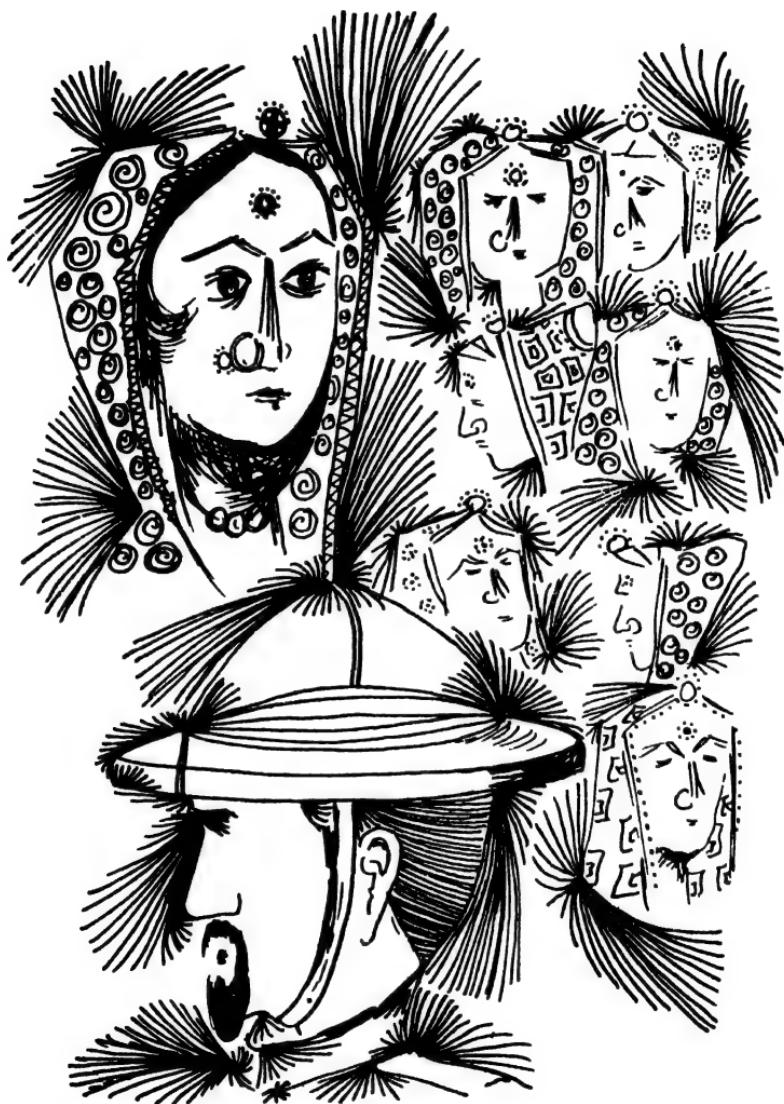
—Neither I'm a goddess, nor am I a piece of goldsmith's work. My mother gave birth to me and God has bestowed me with beauty.

The chief further asked her :

*Re to kani des ki padmini
Ne kanka ghar ki nar ?*

—From which country do you come and to whom do you belong ?

The Gujari told him all about herself. Now the chief wanted to seduce her. He had in his mind to win her heart as he was moved by her beauty



and didn't want to let her go. He said :

*"Re too katha dhabad chhodh de
Ne khasa malmal per
Re too kansa peetal chhodh de
Ne too sona chandi per
Re too tooti khatli chhodh de
Ne chhappar palang pe paudh
Re too chhapar palange paudh ne
Tahari daasiyan dabe paon."*

—O ye, why do you wear rough clothes ? Come along with me at my camp and wear silk costumes. In place of brass and copper ornaments, I'll offer you gold. In place of broken *charpai*, I'll give you a decorated soft bed. Maid-servants would be at your command. You are so lovely that you deserve all these comforts.

But the graceful and honest Gujari replied :

*"Re hoon ek pala-bhar dau re
Tahara khasa malmal mol
Re hoon doye pala-bhar dau re
Tahara sona-chandi ro mol
Re hoon teen pala-bhar dau re
Tahara chhapar palang ro mol
Re too eand-band mat bol re
Soodi bani bol
Aiso maroongi jhapto
Tahari kamar doongi todh."*

— I don't care for your silk robes. I've so much of wealth that I can have them in tons. And in tons have I gold and silver. I despise your soft bed for I'm contented with whatever I have. O ye soldier, don't talk to me in this way. Behave yourself, otherwise I'll break your bones.

The chief was taken aback. He had never expected that he would receive this kind of treat-

ment from a poor milkmaid. He couldn't speak a word further. He simply ordered her to leave the camp at once.

Soon the Gujari came back to her house with other girls. Every one was surprised to see her come back as they had no hope that she would be spared by the soldiers.

The chief made a complaint of this incident to the Emperor :

*"Ajec suno ji mahara Dilli ra badsa
Mahari araj suno dyan lagaya."*

— O the emperor of Delhi, listen to me patiently what I say.

But the news of his misbehaviour had reached the ears of the emperor. He took him to task for his misconduct and warned him :

*"Re too hira le le moti le le
Par too parnari ro mol kadi mat kije."*

— O you fool, you may take diamonds and pearls, but be aware of the woman and never in future dare to seduce any married girl.

The chief bowed his head in shame for the misbehaviour. He promised never to approach a married woman again for his pleasure.

21

THE PRIEST'S DAUGHTER

A businessman had a son whom he married when he grew up. When his daughter-in-law arrived, the businessman put her a question : "Which is the best season ?"

After thinking for a while she answered : "O my father-in-law, I like the winter. We get hot food, wear warm clothes and take sound sleep."

The businessman didn't approve his daughter-in-law's liking. After a few days, he got his son married to the King's daughter. He asked his new daughter-in-law the same question.

The King's daughter said : "I like the summer because we wear light clothes and eat light food. We don't even catch cold and how pleasant it is to take bath very often. What more do we want ?"

The businessman disapproved this daughter-in-law too. Soon he arranged his son's marriage to a minister's daughter, and when the bride came home he put her the same question.

Within a second the minister's daughter responded : "Well I like the rainy season. The rain drizzles on the roof and creates sounds of music. Everywhere we see greenery and swings are suspended on trees. Really, it is the best season !"

This daughter-in-law didn't appeal to him either. The businessman brought another bride for his son. She was the daughter of a priest. He asked her the same question. The priest's daughter said : "In fact I like all the seasons. Every season has its own charm."

The businessman liked the answer. Perhaps this was the daughter-in-law who appealed to him. He said to his son : "Now I've got the daughter-in-law of my choice."

One day all the four daughters-in-law were playing with pebbles. The same time the businessman happened to pass by. He didn't prefer his daughters-in-law playing with ordinary stone pieces. He called one of them and gave five jewels to play with. When the game was over all the daughters-in-law went away leaving the jewels on the mat they were sitting on. But the priest's daughter picked up the precious stones and put them in her bag which she tied to her waist.

One day the businessman said to his son's wives : "Give me your ornaments, my daughters-in-law, I'm going to a jeweller's shop. I will get them polished."

All the daughters-in-law handed over their jewellery except the daughter of the priest. She said that she didn't want her ornaments to be polished very often. After all they were made of gold. Gold is gold and needs no polishing.

The businessman collected the ornaments from the other three and tied them together in a piece of cloth. That day he postponed his visit to the market. So all the ornaments, which he was to take with him to the jeweller's shop, were kept aside.

That very night the businessman's house was plundered by dacoits. Unfortunately, everyone had

to run for his life in various directions. The businessman, his son and his four daughters-in-law later joined each other in a jungle. Nothing was left with them. Everyone had to run as he was.

They had no bread and had very little of clothings. The pauper businessman said : "Has anyone anything which could be sold so that something to eat could be bought from the market?" The priest's daughter took out one jewel from the bag which she had tied to her waist and gave it to her father-in-law. Seeing the jewel the old man gave a sigh of relief. He thought that after selling the jewel, not only the day-to-day problem would be over, but he could also start his business again. He took the jewel and went to a near by town. He had no such experience. So on reaching the market he began to announce : "Jewel, jewel, does anybody want to buy it ?"

The people took him to be a fool. Jewels were not sold on the roads. But a crafty jeweller sensed a good business. He called the businessman in his shop and asked him to show the jewel. The businessman, who was in torn clothes and looking like a poor man, took out the jewel from his pocket and gave it to the jeweller. Seeing the jewel his face brightened up. He changed his attitude and said to the businessman : "Now get out of my shop or I shall call the police and get you imprisoned. You seem to have stolen it from somewhere."

The businessman couldn't say any word. He had to come out of the shop losing the jewel. When he reached his people he narrated the incident.

Now the son went to the market with another piece of jewel. He too was innocent in these matters. Like his father he too lost the jewel in the hands of the same deceitful jeweller.

Now the priest's daughter set out to make a

deal. First she went to a washerman and borrowed fine clothes and dressed herself as a man. Then she borrowed a smart mare. With all this makeup she took a round of the market to impress the jewellers that a prince is in search of some costly ornaments. The same jeweller approached her and inquired : "What are you looking for, Sir ?"

The priest's daughter said in a manly voice : "I want to buy some good jewels. Do you have any ?"

The jeweller nodded his head and requested her to come into his shop. The priest's daughter followed him. The jeweller took out the same two jewels which he had snatched from the businessman and his son. The priest's daughter immediately recognised her lost jewels. She asked the jeweller about the price of the jewels. He quoted a very high price. The priest's daughter said : "If that's the price, then I would like to sell some of my jewels which are similar to yours. Will you buy them at the same rate ?" Saying this she showed him the other three jewels. The jeweller became dumbfounded. But he composed himself and said : "Sir, your jewels are not so costly as mine."

"I don't think so. There is no difference between mine and yours. If you don't believe, call the other jewellers to evaluate them. If they say that my jewels are inferior to yours then I shall present my jewels to you", said the priest's daughter.

The jeweller had to call the other jewellers in his shop. After examining the jewels they all agreed that they were of the same quality. They also fixed a price which was certainly higher than the one jeweller had quoted. The priest's daughter, in a prince's disguise, asked the jeweller before the other jewellers : "Now tell me from where did you get these jewels?"

The jeweller couldn't say anything. He folded his hands : "Please don't ask me that. I'll tell you in confidence."

Within a few minutes all the jewellers left the shop. The priest's daughter said : "I can guess what you want to tell me. Well return these jewels to me which you have snatched away from my men. Don't take it easy or I shall have to call the police."

The jeweller now again folded his hands and said : "Kindly excuse me. I never knew that they were your men." He handed over the two jewels to her. The priest's daughter pocketed all the jewels except one which she sold to the same jeweller at the price quoted by the committee of the jewellers.

The priest's daughter now returned to the jungle, giving back the borrowed clothes to the washerman and the mare to his master. She narrated the whole episode. All of them were pleased to get the lost jewels. The businessman was extremely happy with his daughter-in-law. He said : "Didn't I tell you that she was the only clever daughter-in-law of my choice."

Then all of them returned home. There everything was taken away by the dacoits. Nothing was left over. The day when the businessman had asked her daughters-in-law to get their ornaments polished, the priest's daughter had not given her jewellery. But now she gave them to her father-in-law to make a fresh start and re-establish the business. The father-in-law sold her ornaments and started the business again. Soon he became rich as before and lived happily.

THE CLEVER DEBTOR

ONCE there was a debtor. He had taken a large amount of money from the people of the village. Unfortunately, he had to pass through bad days and could not pay back the money he had borrowed. So he thought of leaving the village, but he didn't want to keep any of his moneylenders in the dark. So before leaving the village he decided to announce his departure to the villagers.

His name was Uderam and his wife's name was Sanja. They had a son called Basanti. Weaving was his family profession. He continued the same work though it did not give much to him to support his family. One day he picked up his belongings and went through the market singing :

*“Sanja thi to sanjhe gayee,
Gayo Basanti poot
Uderam bhi jayega,
Mar bagal mein soot.
Sab se Sita-Ram, Bhai...Sita-Ram...”*
—Sanja has gone the last evening,
And so has his son—Basanti,
Uderam shall also go,
With all his implements.
Good-bye everyone... Good-bye...

The villagers thought that he was singing in good mood. But the next day they found that Uderam has really left the village.



23

THE BIRD'S UTTERANCES

There was a King. In the courtyard of his palace there was a *bakul* tree. Every night a strange bird happened to come and sit on one of its branches and used to utter four things in four different hours of the night.

In the first hour the bird would sing :

*Kis mukh dudh piyaun,
Kis mukh dudh piyaun.*

(In which mouth should I feed ?)

In the second hour the bird would say :

*Aisa kahoon na deekh,
Aisa kahoon na deekh.*

(Never seen such before,)

In the third hour the bird sang:

*Ab hum karboo ka,
Ab hum karboo ka.*

(What should I do now.)

In the fourth hour the bird said :

*Sab brahmin mar jaye,
Sab brahmin mar jaye.*

(All brahmins should die.)

Every night the same lines were repeated by the bird. The King became worried when he heard these utterances. He called the priest and asked

him the meaning of the bird's call. The priest did not understand anything. He told the King that he would explain to him the meaning later. He began to ponder over the words, but failed to find any relevant solution. He became sad and equally worried as the King. When he entered his house his wife asked : "Why are you so sad ? I hope everything is all right."

"What should I tell you", explained the priest, "I'm in a fix. The King has asked me the meaning of what a bird in his courtyard says during the four different hours of the night. If I fail to reply, my prestige would be at stake. Also, I might lose my job and we might remain breadless."

"Well, would you tell me what the bird says ?"

"Leave it aside. Wise people were unable to find out the meaning, what the hell can you do ? Don't strain your brain unnecessarily."

"Oh ! please tell me", insisted his wife. The priest had to tell his wife all the four utterances. After listening to them the wife said : "What's there in these utterances. I can give you the meaning rightaway.

After discussing among themselves the priest went to the King and said : "There is nothing difficult in unfolding the meaning of the bird's words. Even my wife can tell their meaning."

The sun set. The priest's wife was summoned. All the courtiers and the ministers were also summoned. In the first hour of the night the bird came on the tree and said :

*Kis mukh dudh piyaun,
Kis mukh dudh piyaun.*

The King told the priest's wife to listen to what the bird was saying. She replied : "My Lord, the bird is singing only a part of a verse."

“What is it ? Kindly tell me the verse”, asked the King.

“My lord, listen to it, it is like this :

*Lanka mein Ravana bhayo,
Bees bhuja dass sheesh,
Mata oki ya kahe,
Kis mukh dudh piyaun,
Kis mukh dudh piyaun.*

Ravana having twenty arms and ten heads, lived in Sri Lanka. His mother comes to him says, “In which mouth should I feed ? ”

Quite right, quite right, you have interpreted it correctly”, said the King happily.

In the second hour of the night the bird said :

*Aisa kahoon na deekh,
Aisa kahoon na deekh.*

Hearing this the priest’s wife said : “Yes, I’ve followed it. The bird is saying :

*Charon dishara ham phire,
Mag jumbo Navdeep,
Bin chinta ko aadmi,
Aisa kahoon na deekh,
Aisa kahoon na deekh.*

I went round the world even to Jumbo island and Navdeep. But I never came across a man without any worry.

In the third hour the bird uttered :

*Ab hum karboo ka,
Ab hum karboo ka.*

The priest’s wife said : “Listen my Lord :

*Panch baras ki kanya ka,
Sathe diya biyah,
Baithi karam bisoorti,
Ab hum karboo ka,
Ab hum karboo ka.*

A five year old girl is married to a sixty year old man. The poor girl sits and curses her luck saying what should she do now ?

Everyone was pleased with her interpretations. In the fourth hour of the night the bird said :

*Sab brahmin mar jaye,
Sab brahmin mar jaye.*

The King said : "This seems to be highly objectionable. What have the poor brahmins done, why should they die ? "

The priest's wife said : "My lord, I've already told you that the bird is chanting only half the couplet. The whole thing is like this :

*Vishva sangat jo kare,
Sura mas jo khaye,
Bin sapre bhojan kare,
Ye sab brahmin mar jaye,
Ye sab brahmin mar jaye.*

One who goes to a bad woman, eats meat, drinks intoxicating stuff and sits for one's meal without taking bath, all such brahmins should die.

All the courtiers were very pleased with the answers. The King presented the best four jewels from his treasure to the priest's wife. He was happy to have such a woman as his subject.

A group of people in the chaupal of a village gossiped about the dishes they had enjoyed during the day. Amongst them was a blind man who was very inquisitive. He heard one of the farmers saying : "I've had a fine dish of *Kheer* this morning."

The blind man had never come across the word *Kheer* as he had never tasted the kind of thing the farmer had mentioned. Besides being blind since his early age, he was poor and hard pressed. He inquired with curiosity : "Brother, what kind of thing is this *Kheer* ?"

Quick came the reply : "It is a white thing, pure white thing."

The blind man, unfortunately, had no idea of colours. To him the word *white* failed to create any sort of association in his mind.

Just to make himself enlightened he further asked as to what type of *white* it was.

Replied the person who had had the dish that morning : "O friend, it is just like the bird *bagula*."

This reply too didn't satisfy the curiosity of the blind man. His inquisitiveness didn't subside a bit. He wanted to know more about the *Kheer* and the word *bagula* further made him confused. He inquired : "What the hell of a thing is this *bagula* ?"

Now the person felt a little baffled But instantly he caught hold of an idea to solve the

problem. He raised his elbow, gave a slight bent in the hand, twisted his arm, made the palm in shape of a neck and said : "Touch it."

The blind man then touched his bent arm and even the posture of his raised elbow, but he could-not get the idea of the thing which the farmer wanted to convey. He nodded his head and pondered a little. He gave a thorough thought over the shape of the thing and tried to recollect something. Then with full confidence he declared : "I would never take *Kheer*, never...never like to have it."

The assemblage got stunned to hear his announcement as they had never expecte i this kind of reaction from the blind man.

"But why ? " asked a couple of farmers.

"Because", said the blind man, "*Kheer* is a kind of crank, twisted and curved thing. It will get stuck in my throat."

GLOSSARY

Anga—Waistcoat,

Baccha—Child.

Bada—A spicy snack, eaten with curd.

Baphala—A king of wheat cake popular in Malwa countryside.

Bakul—A flowering tree

Barya—A small earthen not.

Banjara—A gypsy trader.

Bhajiya—A spicy snack.

Bhalkudiya—Well jumped.

Bhandari—Store-keeper.

Chapatis—Bread.

Charpai—a simple pot.

Choli—Bodice.

Chowk—Coloured seat.

Chhanchhad—A kind of bird.

Chuhka—A pest

Churma Laddu—A variety of sweet balls made with wheat flour.

Diwan—Chief Minister.

Dev—A god.

Fafa—A pest

Gammat Mandali—Dramatic troupe.

Galwani—Sweet dish made of gur (made of sugarcane)

Gwalan—Milkmaid.

Gara—Food for the wild animals,

Jawar—Millet.

Jagir—Landed property.

Jamaiji—Son-in-law.

Jholi—Swing bag.

Jogin—A woman ascetic.

Kaman—A kind of marriage song usually sung at the bride's place for a magical effect on the groom.

Kheer—A sweet dish made by rice boiled in milk.

Kingri—A fiddle.

Kodo—The popular small millet. *paspalum scrobiculatum*.

Kootki—A very small millet, *panicum psilopodium*.

Katua—A pest.

Laddu—Sweet balls.

Maharaj—King ; priest ; an elderly man.

Maibap—Parents.

Maina—Indian starling.

Mua—An evil spirit which helps the tiger in finding its hunt.

Munshi—Clerk.

Neem—A tree, *Azadirachta Indica*.

Panya—A bread made of maize flour, popular amongst Bhils.

Pattal—Leaf platter.

Puri—A fried cake.

Sakti—Strength ; name of a place of Chhattisgarh.

Samadhi—A place where a dead is buried on which a platform is erected.

Shrap—Curse.

Sasuji—Mother-in-law.

Saptapadi—Wedding ritual in which bridal pair go round the sacred fire seven times.

